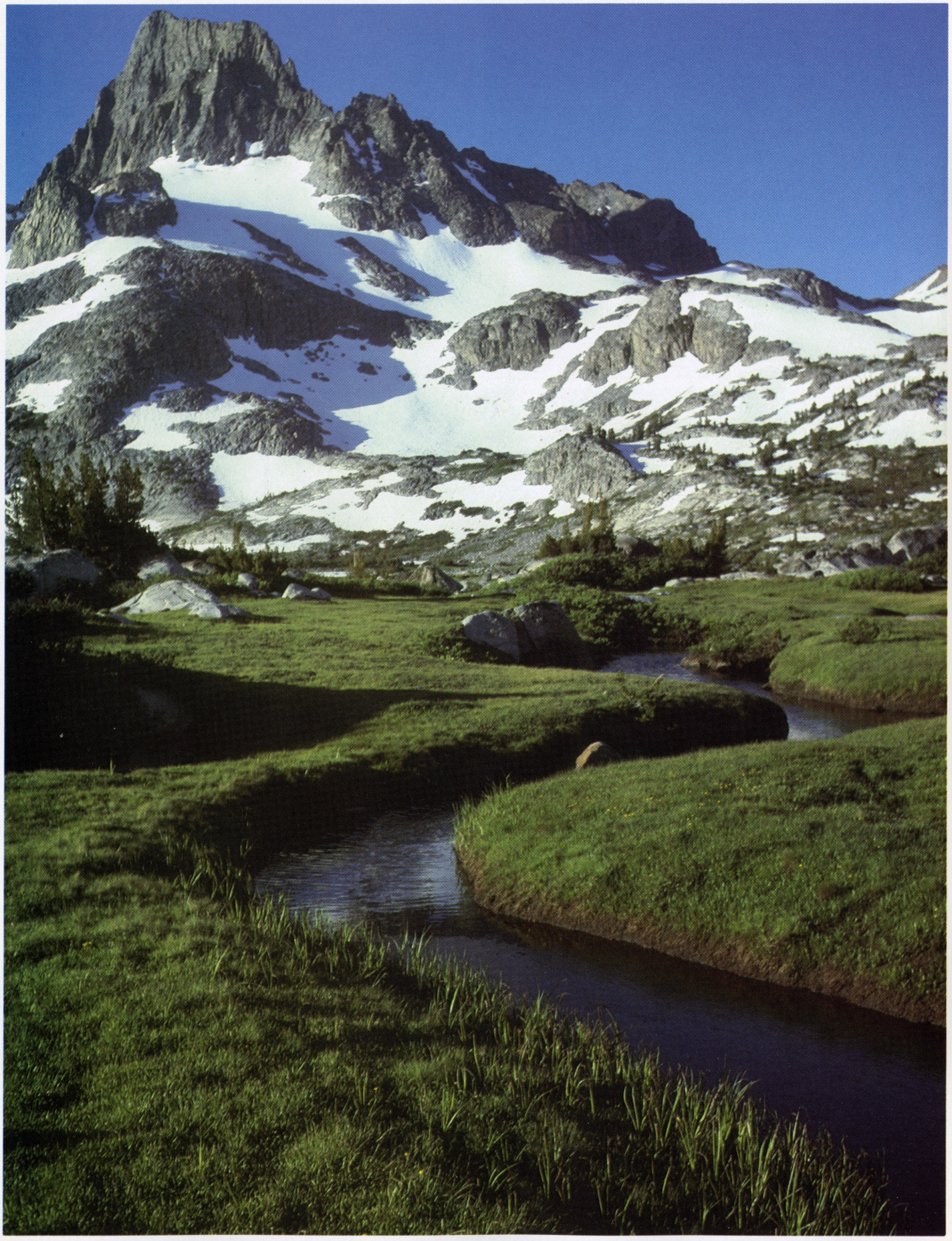
Excerpts from the Pulitzer Prize nominated book Gunfighters, Highwaymen, and Vigilantes

JULY/AUGUST 1985 $2.50

Sierra Life

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HIGH SIERRA

Climbing the Palisades • Tule Elk • Rick Wheeler
Sailboarding Sierra Style • The Fremont Expedition
Walley's Hot Springs • Hope Nolen • Photo Contest Winners



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Letters to the Editor

I wish to thank you for the lovely article written by Marty Forstenzer which you published in the January issue of the Sierra Life magazine. It was one of the best interviews that I have ever had.

I sent a copy to the editor of Putnam Publishing Company. They are publishing a book about my life in the animated cartoon industry. It will be out this fall.

I also sent a copy to Tom Capra, senior executive of the TV show *60 Minutes*—Gracie and I were interviewed by Diane Sawyer a while ago and it will be shown soon on a Sunday night.

Gracie and I are looking forward to meeting your staff on our first trip to Silver Lake this year.

Walter Lantz
Hollywood, CA

What a delightful surprise to find your magazine at the San Francisco Sports and Boat Show. I had the opportunity last fall to travel the entire length of the Owens Valley. It was my first visit, but it will not be my last. I envy those of you fortunate enough to live there year 'round, and if I could I'd move in a minute. I guess I should feel fortunate that at least I can look forward to receiving Sierra Life every other month, and an occasional visit.

Re your article on Manzanar, I was stunned to find that, other than the Guard House and attached plaque, absolutely nothing remains. It is hard to envision 10,000 people living there. The only other people who were there with me were an Asian family, no doubt Japanese from their long and sad expressions. They said nothing, and I left them alone.

Francis X. Dennen
San Francisco, CA

Your beautiful magazine, Sierra Life, is by far the best I have ever seen on the Sierra Nevada and its history. For 32 years, I have climbed, hiked and camped in Sequoia National Park, and been a member of the Sierra Club since 1956. I have walked over 1200 miles in the High Sierra, have over 4,000 color slides of all areas, am credited with 23 peaks over 12,000 feet, and at age 52 still rapture at the wonderment of the beauty and tranquility found in the High Sierra.

My wife and I recently spent a 3-day holiday, staying in Bishop and visiting Lake Sabrina, South Lake, North Lake, Convict Lake, and the Mammoth Lakes area. We found your beautiful magazine at the Best Western Motel in Bishop (Westerner).

Hal Palmer
Glendale, CA

Enid A. Larson is the great-aunt of Alan R. Kabat of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University. We want him to have the issue with the outstanding article about Enid. You did a superb job of capturing on paper Enid's dedication and great skills as a true "Environmental Guardian!" We are very proud of her and thank Sierra Life for the fine tribute!

George and Carol Kabat
Spokane, WA

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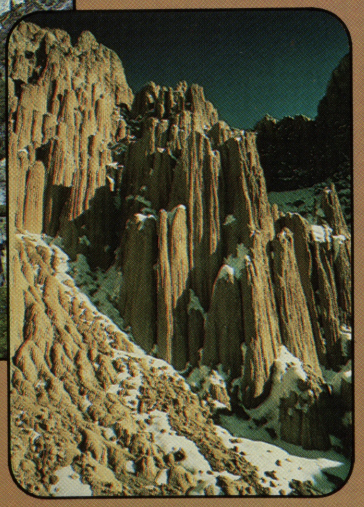

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Editor's Corner

FADS

Most Americans are used to the idea that every so often, half the people they know rush out to try a new game, fashion, dance, exercise or other diversion. In just the last few years, fads have grown around video games, jogging, disco and Western clothes. Michael Jackson and Trivial Pursuit are currently hanging in there. Fads have become a regular fingersnap in the rhythm of American life.

I had the experience of working in a retail book store when *The Beverly Hills Diet* was released. No matter how many boxes of those books we got, we couldn't keep it in stock. In fact, it sold out of every store in town.

What impressed me most about the people who came into the store to buy the sold-out *Diet* was their genuine *anguish* when they realized they couldn't get their hands on it. Sometimes things turned ugly. People *demanded* that we sell them the book. A few times, we thought that they were going to storm the stock room, convinced that we were lying and were really hiding books back there. A siege mentality developed. Just when we were about to start wearing battle fatigues and helmets to work, the fad subsided, and things returned to normal.

Fads are a complex social phenomenon involving alienation and the materialist ethic. The one ingredient that has been essential to their proliferation is television. The force of that medium has been thoroughly discussed; when millions of people plug into the same idea at the same time, a powerful dynamic takes place. Fads are a byproduct of that dynamic.

Even though fad activities may in themselves be harmless, or even worthwhile and paradoxically healthy (like jogging and aerobics), the fad phenomenon is a symptom of an unhealthy aspect of our national psyche.

What can fad-obsessed people do to detoxify themselves? They can turn off their televisions for a few days. Get into the fresh air and green countryside. Go hiking, camping, boating or fishing. Or, as many thousands do, visit the Sierra, and get relief fast.

Marty Forstenzer

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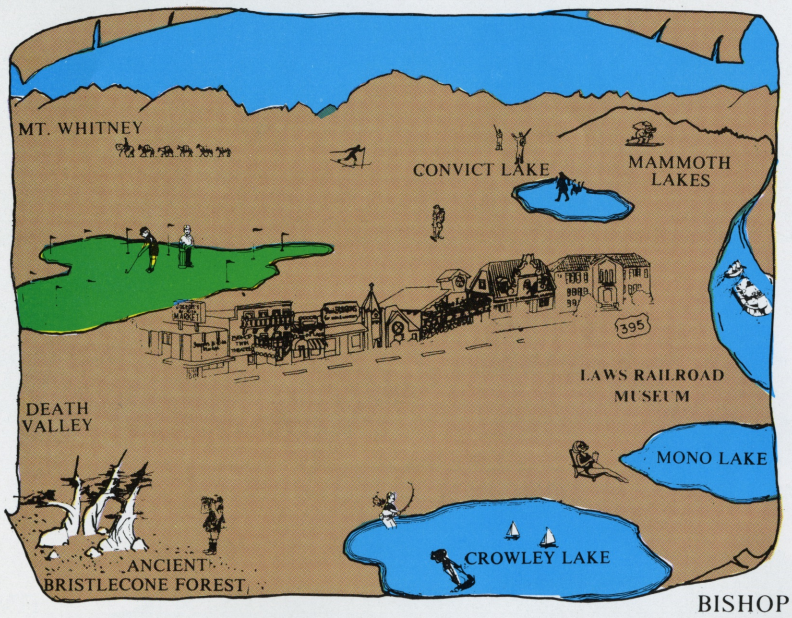

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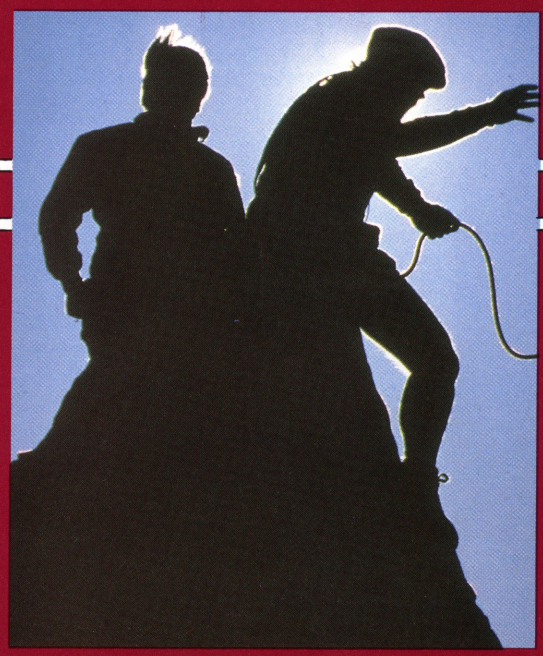

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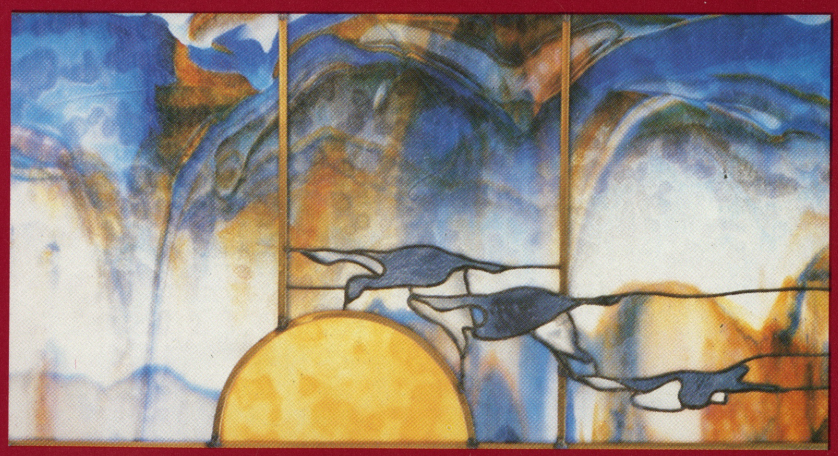
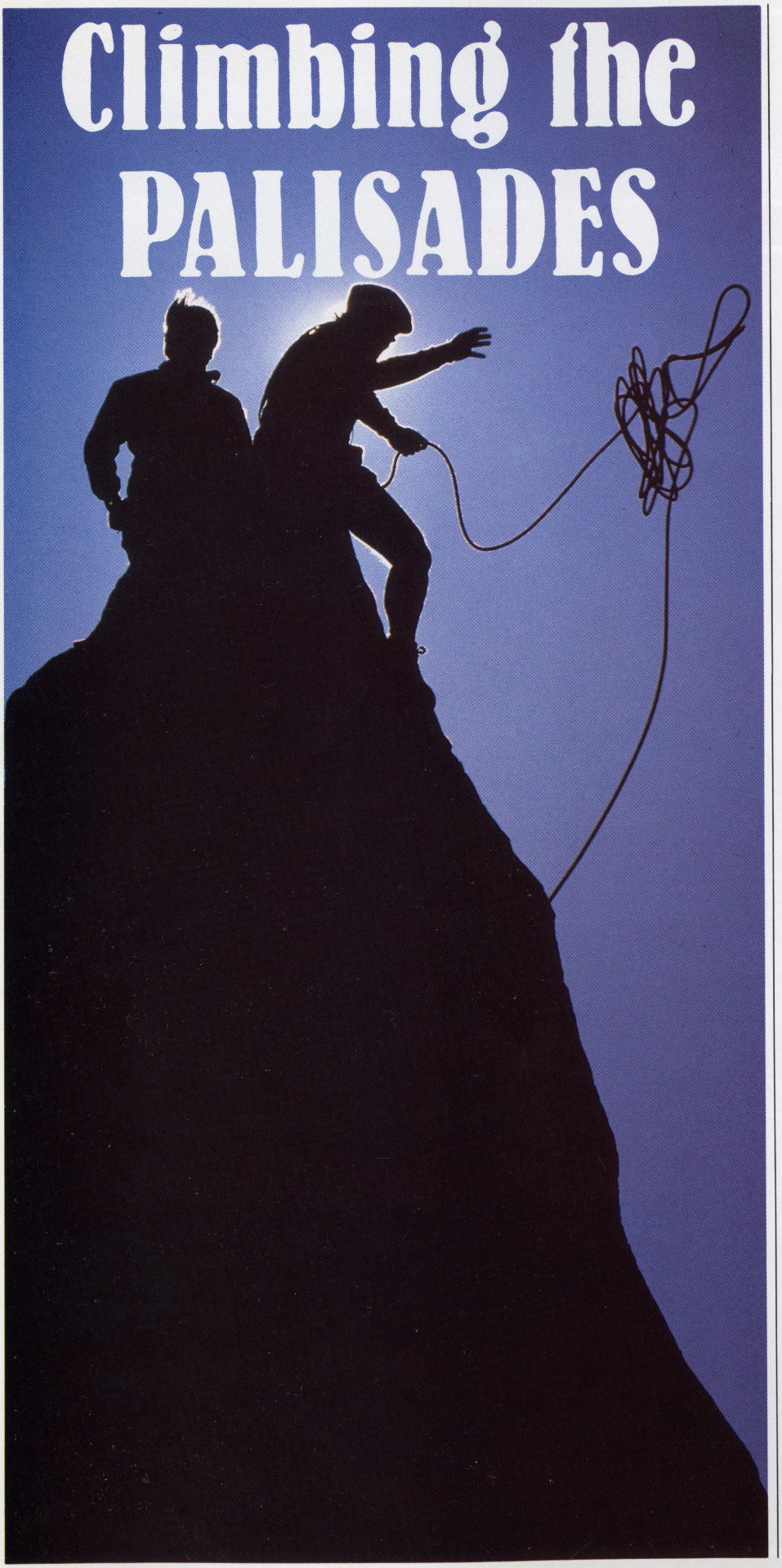


Our Cover: Moonlight Lake in the Sabrina Basin, photograph by Michael Pope.

Climbing the PALISADES



Text and Photos by
Gordon Wiltsie

Nowhere is our Sierra Nevada more truly the "snowy range" than the Palisades, an unbroken wall of ice and granite, shadowing the Sierra's largest glaciers. Situated midway between Mount Whitney and Yosemite, this crown of the Sierra crest includes six 14,000 foot peaks and offers a wide range of alpine climbing.

Though occasionally primed with loose rocks and prone to surprise thunderstorms, snow and avalanche, the Palisades are a remarkably benevolent place to climb. All-day summer rains are rare and many routes on the highest peaks are short enough for early risers to be down before afternoon buildups. Nevertheless, they are challenging mountains, with real exposure and ever-present hazards—worthy rivals and teachers, indeed.

I know many climbers (including myself) who have struggled for days or weeks on some stormbound dragon's tooth halfway around the world, only to wish the whole time they'd just stayed in the Palisades. It would have been more *fun*.

Technically, the Palisades include all contiguous summits between The Thumb and Mount Agassiz, along with lesser peaks encircling nine Palisade Glaciers. Sometimes Split Mountain, though not contiguous, is also included. The Sierra crest runs southeast to northwest here, forming a formidable barrier. Southwest of it spread the high alpine basins of Kings Canyon National Park, sparkling with lakes and tiny treeline meadows; northeast lie the north and south forks of Big Pine Canyon, draining the Palisade Glacier and tumbling 10,000 feet to the floor of the Owens Valley, America's deepest.

Ever since learning to climb in the Palisades fifteen years ago, I've been

drawn back every year. Not only are there always new challenges, but classic routes which are worth repeating many times. A good route-finder can get lost for days amongst glittering alpine lakes, lodgepole pines, and vast expanses of talus, glacier ice and vertical rock. Rarely have I seen a crowd.

Compared with the nearby Whitney and Yosemite climbing areas, the Palisades are relatively unknown outside a limited mountaineering community. They don't tower like the Tetons from books or postcards, and are scarcely even visible from the nearest major highway.

Indeed, even as I write, I consider burning by manuscript. In this day of lining up for popular climbs, why share the secret?

Fortunately, even if I lied and called them the world's greatest climbing area, my words would scarcely make Big Pine Canyon another Yosemite climber's camp. National Forest and Park Service wilderness policies limit wilderness permits for all approaches, and climbers must compete with anglers, backpackers, campers, and boy scouts to get them. As well, there are just enough loose rocks, offending ledges, and long approaches to keep most valley boys hitching elsewhere.

Amongst a certain cadre of mountaineers, however, the Palisades are a mecca, rich in tradition and lore. They have been an important site in the development of American technical mountaineering and, indeed, have never been a secret. Sometimes it just seems that way.

The first major Palisade summit to be attempted was the highest, 14,242 foot North Palisades. In 1903, Joseph LeConte and party tried its southwest side, first reaching what is now called the U-Notch. Unable to proceed on a steep rock above, they traversed south to 14,162 foot Mount Sill, climbing its easy backside instead. The next day they returned to North Palisades, finding easier climbing above a different gully, and succeeded in reaching its summit as well. This route remains popular and catches many would-be peak baggers unprepared for its dramatic exposure and tricky route finding. For nearly two decades thereafter, no new summits were climbed. Then Norman Clyde appeared.

Clyde, who considered the Palisades his home, may have been the most prolific Sierra mountaineer of all time. He found literally hundreds of new routes in his wanderings, and often climbed solo, self-belaying or chopping steps for his hob-nailed boots when necessary. Many of his climbs are customarily repeated today with ropes, crampons and anchors, and even very experienced alpinists are sometimes intimidated by pitches described by him as "third class."

As a young man, Clyde taught school in the Owens Valley, but was fired for insubordination (some say because Clyde, an expert marksman, blasted two shots over the heads of his unruly class.) Subsequently he retreated to the mountains, surviving as one of America's first climbing vagabonds. He was an eccentric and intensely private man who would often disappear for weeks at a time, usually bent beneath packs of legendary size, stuffed with cast iron pots, rifle, pistols, books, five cameras, three pairs of shoes, two fishing rods, kitchen utensils, food, and any other tools that might make his life in the mountains easier. Few could keep up with him, though, and altogether he made at least fifteen notable first ascents and new routes in the Palisades.

Also active in the '20s and '30s (often with Clyde) were many mountaineers from the Appalachian and Sierra Clubs: Robert Underhill, who introduced modern rope technique to the United States; Jules Eichorn and Bestor Robinson, who would later climb Yosemite's Higher Cathedral Spire; Glen Dawson, David Brower, Hervey Voge, John and Ruth Mendenhall, and many others. By the end of the 1930s, nearly every summit had been climbed by numerous routes.

Though many climbers of the '40s and '50s continued to repeat classic lines, new routes did not again emerge with any frequency until Larry Williams began a Palisades mountaineering guide service in 1958. Williams was tragically killed in an airplane crash six years later, but his legacy, Palisades School of Mountaineering, became a source of many new and exciting first

Gordon Wiltsie explains . . .

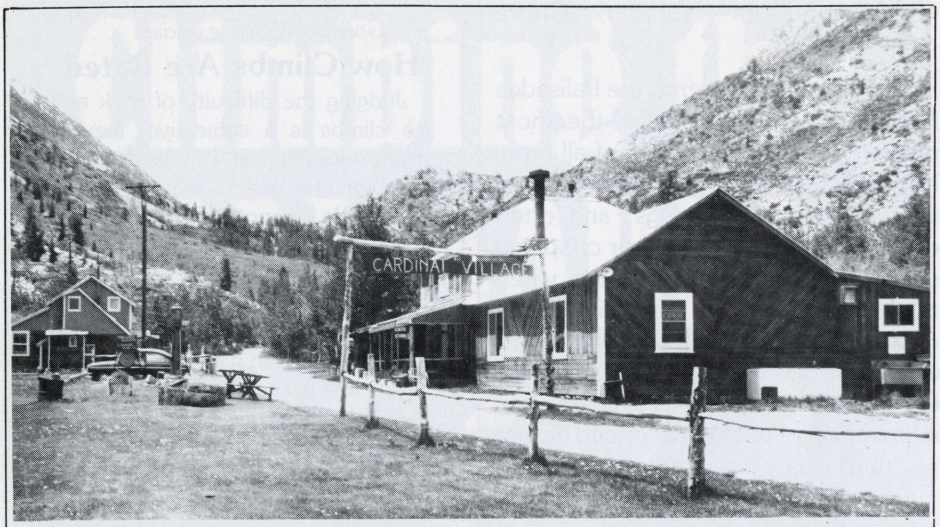
How Climbs Are Rated

Judging the difficulty of rock and ice climbs is a subjective, inexact proposition, at best. Climbs that are easy for one person may be nearly impossible for another. Nevertheless, some standard is needed for communication and several rating systems have evolved in different countries. In the United States we use a decimal system with two parts.

The first part of the rating indicates a climb's length and commitment, on a scale of Roman numeral I through VI, called the "grade." Grade I should take only a couple of hours. Grade III would take an average climber most of the day. Grade IVs can be done by experts in a day. Grade V usually requires an overnight bivouac and Grade VI climbs may take anywhere from two days to a week or more, as on Yosemite's El Capitan.

The second number in the rating applies to the climb's technical, gymnastic difficulty, indicated by numbers 1 through 5, commonly called the "class." A first class climb is a hike. A second class climb is equivalent to boulder hopping through talus. A third class climb may use all parts of the body and get quite high above the ground, but usually a rope is not required. Fourth class may require a rope for protection, especially for less experienced climbers, and fifth class almost always requires a belay, with intermediate points of "protection," like pitons or chocks. Because most popular climbs are fifth class, this is further divided into twelve subcategories designated 5.1 through 5.12. 5.12 can be done only by a very few. An average climber can usually "lead" at a moderate 5.6 to 5.8 difficulty.

Yet a third category exists as well. Whenever a climber has to pull or step on a piton, chock, sling or other device not part of the natural rock, he or she has used "aid," indicated by the letter A, and divided itself in difficulty between A.0 and A.6. "Aid" is considered less pure than "free" climbing with just hands and feet, but many big wall climbs do contain long sections where the only means of progress is with aid. Anything over A.3 is quite insecure and scary, with weight resting on very shaky support and the possibility of a long fall if a piton or chock should pull out.



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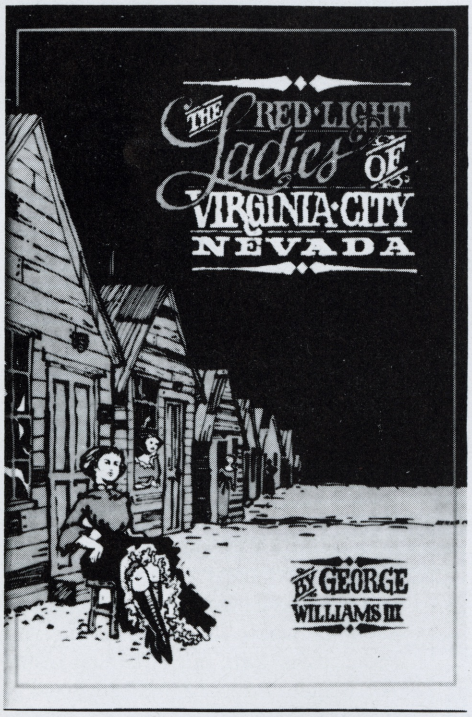

THE REDLIGHT LADIES OF VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA

Virginia City, Nevada, near Reno, was the largest and most successful mining town in the American West. Today Virginia City, looking much as it did in the 1870's, attracts thousands of visitors each year. Based on newspaper reports, census documents and county records, Williams tells of the strange lives of the redlight women. He describes Virginia City's three redlight districts and how they operated legally from the 1860's until 1947. Included are stories of historic figures like Julia Bulette, murdered by John Millian and Cad Thompson, a madam who operated a house for 37 years and died at age 70, still running a house. Contains rare historic photographs.

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ascents, pursued with a laid-back *joie de vivre*.

Most prolific of the early PSOM guides was Don Jensen, a mathematician, Harvard scholar, and veteran of early, hard climbs in Alaska. During his short Palisades tenure, before dying in a bicycle accident, Jensen put up many of the high-standard rock climbs most sought after today.

Climbing and working with Jensen were such "Golden-Agers" from Yosemite and elsewhere as Allen Steck, Frank Sarnquist, Bob Swift, Steve Roper, Walt Vennum, Smoke Blanchard, John Fischer, Doug Robinson, Chris Fredericks, and others. Between these climbers, subsequent PSOM guides like Michael Farrel, Les Robertson and Joe Herbst, and two graduates-turned-guides (Mike Graber and myself), most of the cleanest, most obvious lines have now at least been explored.

Last of the great problems to fall was a thousand-foot vertical prow that splits the east face of Mount Sill, long called *Dead Larry's Pillar*. After years of talk by others, Mike Graber and Mike Farrell casually climbed it at IV 5.10, one of the hardest routes in the range.

Today, mountaineers visiting the Palisades can choose virtually any type of route from short, hard climbs on countless lesser crags and glacier polished whalebacks, long mixed routes, or even a Grade V big wall. Because there are no easy crossings of the Palisades crest, however, most climbers must first choose the region they want to explore.

With notable exceptions, faces are steeper and routes more challenging from the northeast, so most climbers approach up Big Pine Canyon, a steep day's hike past lakes, flower-filled meadows and ever-changing forest environments. Here, too, you must choose between two drainages, the north and south forks.

The former is more popular, with greatest attention paid to summits immediately encircling North Palisades Glacier—Mounts Sill, Polemonium, North Palisades, Starlight and Thunderbolt.

The bones of these parks are solid granite, but they are heavily fractured, meaning rockfall danger and few

monolithic faces. Most routes follow either ridges or couloirs.

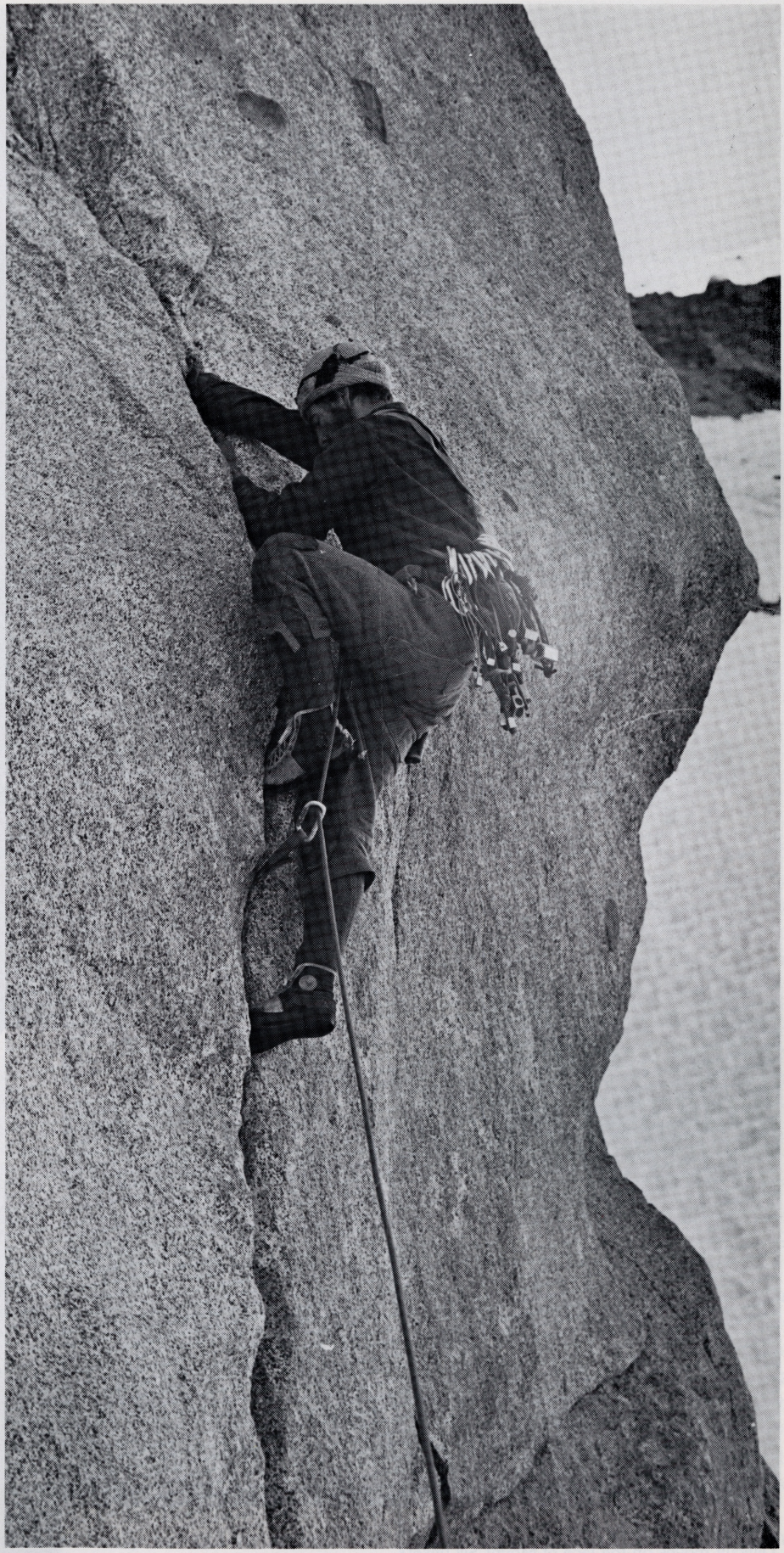
North Palisades is a favorite goal, usually via the *U-Notch Couloir*. Like other crest peak routes, this is approached across a glacier (seldom a problem), with climbing beginning in earnest at the highest crevasse. With good snow conditions the chute is relatively easy, leading to a U-shaped notch from which the summit can be reached by various third to fifth class ways. Late in the summer the snow turns to more challenging ice, and two summers ago the crevasse's ice-bridge collapsed, creating a chasm that deterred all but the most determined climbers.

An even better snow and ice climb on North Palisades is *Clyde's Couloir*, which divides North Palisade's northeast face and separates its northwest peak, often distinguished as a distinct 14,000 foot summit called Starlight. Followed in its entirety, this can be a demanding and scary climb with narrow vertical icicles and ever-present rockfall danger. Most (like Clyde) opt instead to move right several hundred feet up the couloir onto the fourth class northeast buttress of Starlight, long considered one of the most enjoyable alpine climbs in the Sierra. Either summit can be reached from the Buttress.

Mountaineers desiring steeper, harder ice usually choose the *V-North Couloir* on Polemonium Peak, a few hundred yards left of the U-Notch. This is steeper, and although it has been skied twice now, is considered a challenging climb in almost any conditions.

Thunderbolt Peak, northernmost 14,000 foot mountain in the Sierra, is another popular goal, usually done by the couloir used by Clyde, Underhill, Eichorn and four others on the first ascent. This was one of the earliest summits in North America to be climbed with modern rope and piton technique, and the mountain takes its name from lightning that struck the summit block as they sat nearby. Also fun is the *North Couloir* or one of the short rock climbs paralleling the *Underhill Couloir*.

My personal favorite north fork route is Mount Sill's *Swiss Arete*, a climb that always reminds me how enjoyable



Jay Jensen ascends a crack on *Cirith Anodyne*.

Doug Robinson and John Fischer view the Palisades Glacier from Temple Crag.

blankest,steepest face of the buttress past ceilings into a huge, shallow dihedral, which in the late afternoon casts a shadow shaped like its microbial namesake. Again, we found fiercely sustained and difficult climbing, but always *just* enough hold. Perhaps because it was reported only by word of mouth, it has never been repeated.

Further right around the northwest face are perhaps another dozen routes, winding up pinnacles, ridges and gullies. Amongst the best are Don Jensen's *Redeye Pillar* (5.9) on Baradur, a satellite peak, and previously unreported *Cirith Anodyne* (5.10), a nearby five-pitch crack climb up a flatiron at Baradur's toe, first climbed by Doug Robinson, Jay Jensen and myself. Technically easier, but very long and challenging, is Norman Clyde's fourth class *North Couloir*. Most of the climbing is very exposed third and fourth class, and to move fast enough for safety, much must be done without a belay.

South of a ridge connecting Mounts Sill, Gayley, Temple Crag, Alice and Slide, lie the South Fork Basins of Big Pine Creek and the southern Palisade glaciers and summits. These are seldom visited by climbers, but they offer at least as much climbing variety and potential as the more famous North Fork.

Immediately south of the *Swiss Arete* on Mount Sill, but best approached from South Fork, is Sill's imposing *East Face*, a classic 5.7 or 5.8 climb up steep white granite, with sections of very exposed third class. Longer and scarier is *Dead Larry's Pillar* a few hundred feet left.

South along the crest rises shapely Clyde Peak, difficult to climb even by its easiest third class route (many become lost, and without a rope, must turn back.) Two great alpine ridge climbs ascend its northeast face: *Thunderbird Wall* (5.8), done by Don Jensen and Frank Sarnquist; and *Firebird Ridge* (5.9) plucked by Mike Graber and Fred Beckey.

Middle Palisade, the next major point south, is very steep but easy to climb up several long third class gullies, amongst the Sierra's lengthiest. Finally, at the end of the Palisade crest, the complex north walls of the Thumb offer several challenging problems that are seldom even attempted, including a beautiful 5.8 face and crack route put up in 1965.

Between these prominent southfork summits rise countless pinnacles, like teeth on a crosscut saw. Hundreds of cracks and dihedrals lead to these obscure points, like the 12 pinnacles of Palisade Crest (named for dwarves in *The Hobbit*); but unlike Yosemite, where there would be a topo for every variation, most have never even been jammed by human hands. Each year we promise ourselves again that we will explore them.

As mentioned earlier, most climbers approach from the forks of Big Pine Canyon, but because the easiest routes often rise from the southwest side, the greatest number of ascents of crest peaks probably originate from hikers coming up from the John Muir Trail in Kings Canyon. In general, west slopes of the Palisades are more gradual, but North Palisade, Thunderbolt, Winchell and several south fork peaks offer numerous long exposed potential routes on this side, as well. So far only Galen Rowell has seriously explored

them, climbing one Grade IV 5.10 with Warren Harding on Mount Winchell, and another Grade IV 5.10 on North Palisade with David Wilson.

Because many Palisade summits are linked by high, exposed ridges, traversing has become especially popular here. Several peaks can be crossed in a single day and it is possible to go miles above 13,000 feet. Acknowledged master is current PSOM director, John Fischer, who has done a variety of ridge runs with clients. Most impressive was his seven-day traverse of every crest peak between the Thumb and Agassiz, accomplished in 1981 with Jerry Adams.

As climbing areas go, the Palisades have something for virtually any climber, beginner to master alpinist, with a single noteworthy exception. There is little, if any, competitive scene—no favorite bar, climbers' campground or parking lot. No audience.

A few years back PSOM's base camp filled this void, attracting many visitors and passersby alike. Friday night graduation parties would often rage late into the night, complete with music, Greek dancing, and climbing tales tall as the leaping campfire. But even this scene has faded as guides grow older and less free to climb and dance in the alpine sun.

Nowadays, instead of competing for new and bolder climbs, many compete for clients, with all the paperwork and headaches of private enterprise. Harsh feelings sometimes flicker and a golden age is gone.

Most climbers come to the Palisades, however, to *escape* human interactions, not find them. It is still possible to go for days seeing only distant specks of homo sapiens, and part of the magic is simply camping and travelling in the natural exuberance of high Sierra environments.

As integral to Palisade climbing as handholds are less obvious things, often overlooked in the social realities of more crowded, competitive terrain: a pine crow scratching his beak on a whitebark snag; Japanese gardens of lichen, moss and columbine; the cry of a cliff swallow; or just quiet mantras from distant falling water.

All too often friends and I have found ourselves enraptured, disengaged from the idle absurdities of climbing and conquest. As popular in our vocabulary as "on belay" is "whatsay we do a little meadow sniffing today?" But the magnetism of granite usually prevails. One glance to the sweeping serrated horizon is enough to lure us upwards again—year after year. Perhaps someday, like Norman, we'll still be climbing North Palisade on our eightieth birthdays. □

Gordon Wiltsie is a part-time mountain guide and full-time photojournalist. His photos and articles have appeared in a variety of national magazines.

RICK WHEELER Steps Out

By Marty Forstenzer

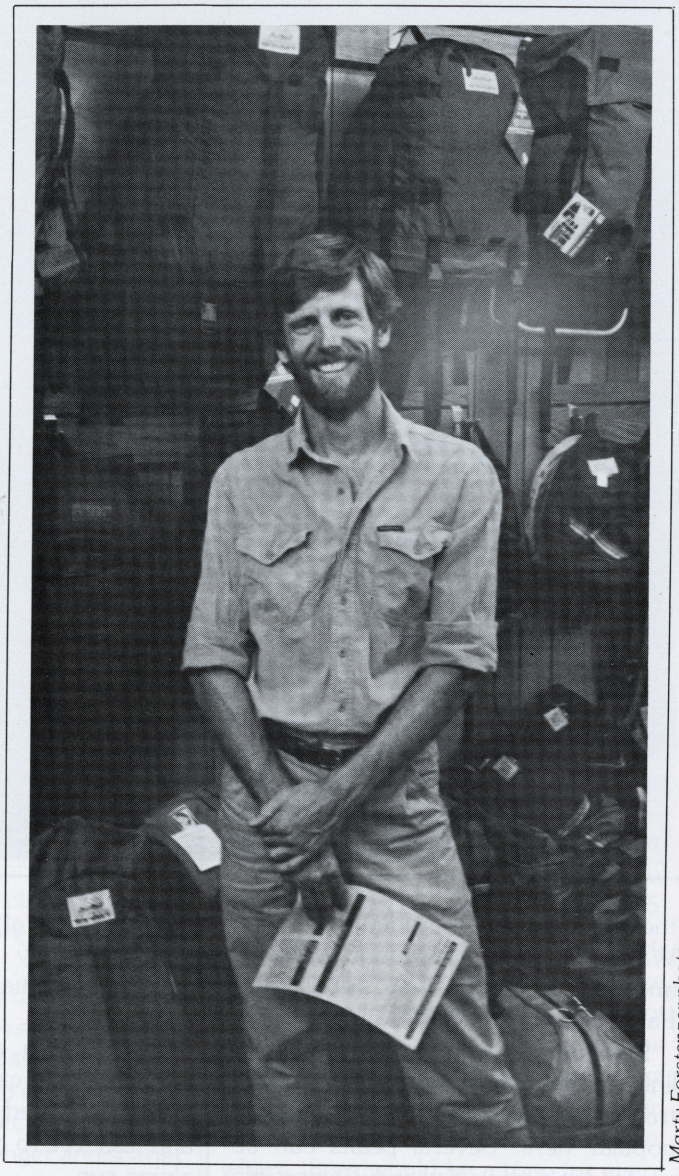
When Rick Wheeler opened a boot repair shop in Bishop seven years ago, he didn't expect it to one day become one of the top boot repair shops in the country. "I figured I'd just stay a cobbler, pound nails and make a living," he says.

Since then, the shop has acquired an impressive reputation. The Los Angeles Times last year called it "one of the West's premier boot repair businesses." Noted climbing guide and outdoor writer Doug Robinson says that the shop turns out "the highest quality mountaineering boot repair work in the country."

Wheeler and Wilson Boots on Highway 395 in Bishop specializes in repair of mountain sport boots—those used in hiking, mountaineering and cross-country skiing. Wheeler and his partner James Wilson do an increasingly large mail order business; boots come in for repair from all over the United States, and beyond. Now expanded into a complete mountain sports equipment and clothing outfitter, the store has become an Eastern Sierra landmark for mountaineers and backpackers.

Rick Wheeler first thought of starting a boot repair business in 1971, while on a 100-mile Sierra backpacking trip. "We'd been out for three months, when my boots fell apart," he says. "I had to walk to the west side and hitchhike to Fresno to get them fixed. I could tell from the way they fixed them that they wouldn't hold together long, and they didn't. So, I hitchhiked to Berkeley and got them fixed there. Ten days later, they were apart again. I hitchhiked *back* to Berkeley and got them fixed again. Ten days later, they were apart again. That's when I knew I could make a living fixing boots here."

Wheeler grew up in Indiana and attended Wabash College, majoring in industrial psychology. He came to California by a circuitous route. "My senior year in college, I flipped a coin—heads was East, tails was West—and it came up East." In Bennington, Vermont, he met Lindsay Fry, a woman from Monterey who introduced him to the climbing-backpacking scene. When he came west to visit Fry in Monterey, he liked California and ended up staying here.



Marty Forstenzer photo

Wheeler's potential as a boot repairman must not have been immediately apparent when he arrived in Bishop in the mid-'70s. "When I first came to town, I already had the shoe repair skills. I went to see "Tennessee," who had owned a shoe repair shop in Bishop for years, and asked him for a job. He took one look at me and said, 'Boy—go to Reno.' "

Disregarding that advice, Wheeler got a job in Bishop working for the Fish & Game Department as a seasonal aide, and started looking for a place to do boot repair. He soon began doing boot work out of a leather shop owned by Scott Keathley, working nights as a cook at Whiskey Creek Restaurant.

Gordon Wiltsie photo

Mountain biking is one of Wheeler's current favorite adventure sports.

The initial response was encouraging, and in 1978 he borrowed some money and bought his own shop. He hired Bob Harrington, whom he knew from a summer spent climbing together in Tuolumne, to work in the shop, after Harrington went to Laney College in Oakland and took a course in shoe repair.

The next two years, the response was overwhelming. "We were getting almost all of the Yosemite climbing trade," Rick says. "Then, backpackers started coming down the Bishop Creek road with their boots."

The wiry, 38-year old boot repair specialist has brought a characteristic thoughtfulness and creativity to his business. "Rick is a challenging person," says partner Wilson. "He's full of new ideas; he has more ideas per hour than anyone I've ever men." Wilson describes his partner as a "versatile, resilient athlete," and notes that an important strength of their business comes from Wheeler's familiarity with a variety of mountain sports.

Wheeler recently gave up climbing after a fifteen year career, which included ascents of El Capitan, Half Dome, and a variety of backcountry routes including some first ascents. "I stopped about a year and a half ago, because it started scaring me too much," he says. "I came real close to dying three times in one day, and that was the beginning of the end for me because I started losing my nerve. As soon as you lose your nerve, it's not fun anymore."

Wheeler turned from climbing to another mountain sport he finds less dangerous—hang gliding. He explains: "To me, hang gliding is safer than climbing. That's what my perception is; it feels safer to me. Therefore, I'm more relaxed, my mental attitude is better—so it probably *is* safer." In addition to climbing and hang gliding, Wheeler is a proficient skier, and continues to enjoy backpacking. His latest predilection is for a relatively new sport, mountain biking. "Mountain bicycles are bikes that are made to be ridden on dirt roads rather than on pavement," he says. "They're designed to be beaten up, abused. . . you attempt to destroy them, but you can't if you buy a good one."

Rick attributes a large share of the shop's success to partner Wilson's business expertise. Wilson, who had previously managed the mail order department at a Berkeley ski shop, bought a 50% share of the business in 1979. "It's quite serendipitous that we ended up being partners," Wheeler says. "Bob Harrington and I were working the repair shop, and we were looking for a place to live. We found an apartment, and our upstairs neighbor turned out to be James." Wilson soon went to work in the shop, and Wheeler recalls, "It became real obvious that he wasn't going to work out as an employee but that he knew a whole hell of a lot more about business than I did. I needed someone to share decisions and responsibilities with, so James bought in. The first six years we were partners, our business doubled every year."

Rick Wheeler is generally acknowledged to be one of the two or three top mountaineering boot specialists around. "There's Steve Komito in Estes Park, Colorado, David Page in Seattle, and us, and we're *it* for repairing and resoling mountaineering footwear. Komito is the granddaddy; he's the reason that any of us ever thought about doing this." Oddly, Wheeler and Komito never met until they ran into each other earlier this year at a Las Vegas ski show. "We kind of looked at each other and said, 'Well, I'll be damned. It's about time we met, isn't it?' "

Rick insists that the credit for his reputation must be shared by his repair staff. "Bob (Harrington) and Dan Asay, Tony Puppo, Mike Pope—the repairmen have been so phenomenal. I've got the reputation, but I've got it because those guys do such a great job," he says.

As the store expanded to become a complete mountain sports outfitter, its reputation expanded accordingly. Climber Robinson calls it the finest mountain shop in California. "The people who work for Rick are not dilettantes," says Robinson, "they're hard core mountaineers in all fields of mountain sports: rock climbing, ice climbing and ski mountaineering, among others. When they comment on their equipment, it's from experience. It's

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refreshing to go into a shop and get the straight story; they know the limitations of the equipment as well as its advantages." Outdoor photographer and climbing guide Gordon Wiltsie (see page 8) says, "They provide an important service for climbers. It's the only place in this area where you can get some kinds of equipment."

The store, which was always something of a hangout for the local climbing community, has grown to become a primary meeting place and information center for local and visiting climbers, backpackers and skiers—a kind of Sierra mountain sports headquarters. As Wheeler explains, of slide shows, clinics, lectures and other events. During the winter, the shop offers cross-country ski clinics in 'How to Ski,' 'How to Wax,' as well as classes in introductory overnight winter backpacking. Wheeler points out that he and Alpine Expeditions (a Bishop-based outdoor guide service) continue to sponsor a snow awareness class even though it loses money every year. "It's 'How Not to Die in the Backcountry,' 'How Not to Get Buried in an Avalanche.' I don't want anybody getting hurt because they take some gear I sold them and don't know the dangers involved in a sport, or how to save themselves if they get in trouble."

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that was partly by design, and partly a natural development. "There are a lot of neat people working here, and friendships establish and people come in to see friends. Also, it became the information place. People come in and want to know, 'How do we get to the Buttermilk (Country)? What are the ice conditions like?' For spring skiing, people call us up from all over the country to find out what the spring skiing conditions are." The store maintains a blackboard which lists such information as ski track conditions, spring skiing conditions, ice conditions, avalanche conditions, or even locations of desert wildflowers. "I think it's a real good service for backpackers," he says. The Forest Service is always sending people down here. I enjoy talking to people, and everyone who works here enjoys talking to people.

"To me, the whole thing about this business is, it should be fun for the customer. James and I are not just selling product, what we're selling is a good time. We want people to be happy when they leave the store, because they had a good time, and they're about to have a better time."

In keeping with that philosophy, Wheeler and Wilson sponsor a variety

This summer, to complement their new line of touring and all-terrain bikes, the store has offered a series of bicycle maintenance workshops, and is co-sponsoring two mountain bike races. Wheeler and Wilson also publish a newsletter several times a year which features an outdoor article or two, lists upcoming Sierra outdoor events of interest, gives product information and announces upcoming sales.

Rick is gratified by the growth of the Eastern Sierra climbing community over the last decade. "When I first came here, (climber) Jay Jensen lived here, Gordon Wiltsie was at school, Doug Robinson visited occasionally, and that was about it; there wasn't the community that there is now. It's grown a lot, and it's great to have the support of all the people who've moved here. It's very, very exciting."

Wheeler and Wilson are making plans to open a second store in Mammoth this fall, which would be similar to the original store in concept but designed to accommodate the Mammoth Lakes customer. They perceive that there is a customer base for their goods in Mammoth which currently is not being served, similar to

the situation in Bishop when they first went retail there.

The economy in the Eastern Sierra has been sluggish lately, but Wheeler sees it merely as a period of transition. "The new economic wave is the young, upscale consumer. Families who visit here come up totally equipped now, they don't spend money like they used to. There's a whole generation that came out of college in the '60s that has money now, because they're bright professionals.

"The alpine guides we've got here—Alpine Expeditions, Palisade School of Mountaineering, Doug Robinson, Gordon Wiltsie—they really bring those upscale people into town. Their clients come up, spend the night in a motel, outfit themselves with food and equipment locally, go into the backcountry for a few days, then they come out, dine in local restaurants, and spend another night in a motel. There are doctors and lawyers and professionals who come here to go climbing, backpacking and mountain biking. They have more money to spend in the area, and they do. I think that's a transition that people concerned about tourism here should address."

Rick is in the Sierra to stay. "There's so much room to do whatever you want to do. There's no feeling of crowding at all. There are the Whites, the Sierra, Death Valley, Saline Valley—nothing but unregulated, go-use-it country.

"Carter and Bard have climbed in most of the mountain ranges of the world; their favorite is the Sierra. (Outdoor photographer) Galen Rowell feels the same way—his favorite place is the Sierra."

Wheeler summarizes his attraction to the Sierra by describing a 'California weekend' he had last year. "That's a five-day weekend," he explains. "One week last year, I went hang gliding one day, went white-water river rafting on the Tuolumne the next, came back to Bishop and laid in the sun at Keough's (Hot Springs) the next, spent a day in the mountains with my girlfirend one day, and then did a 'trans-Sierra' on my bicycle the next. It's phenomenal! That's what I love about the place—there are so many things to do, and so many people to do it with. There's no place like it." □

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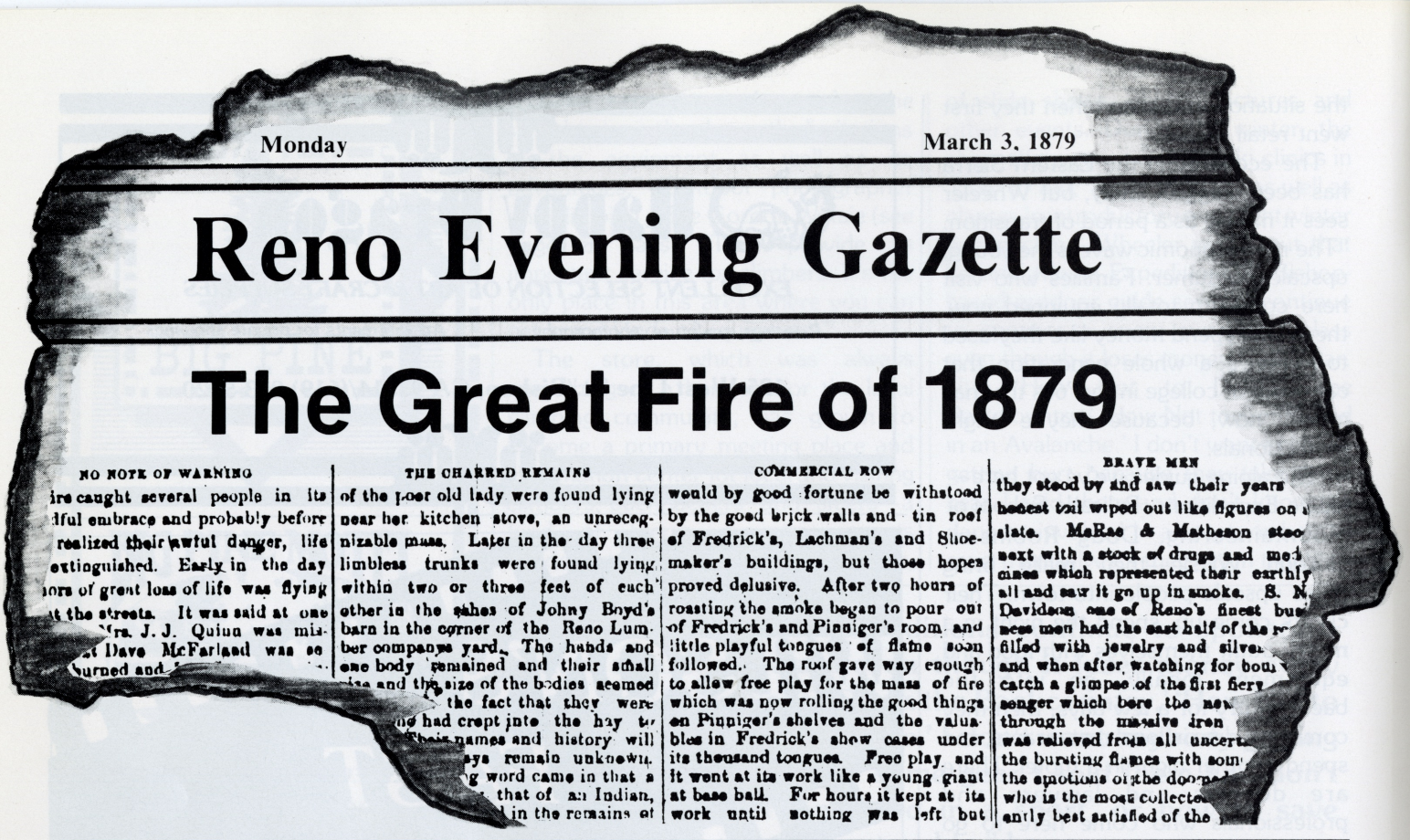

Monday March 3, 1879

Reno Evening Gazette

The Great Fire of 1879

NO NOTE OF WARNING

ire caught several people in its dful embrace and probably before realized their awful danger, life extinguished. Early in the day ors of great loss of life was flying t the streets. It was said at one Mrs. J. J. Quinn was mis- Dave McFarland was se burned and

THE CHARRED REMAINS

of the poor old lady were found lying near her kitchen stove, an unrecognizable mass. Later in the day three limbless trunks were found lying within two or three feet of each other in the ashes of Johny Boyd's barn in the corner of the Reno Lumber companys yard. The hands and one body remained and their small size and the size of the bodies seemed the fact that they were had crept into the hay to Their names and history will ays remain unknown. g word came in that a that of an Indian, in the remains of

COMMERCIAL ROW

would by good fortune be withstood by the good brick walls and tin roof of Fredrick's, Lachman's and Shoemaker's buildings, but those hopes proved delusive. After two hours of roasting the smoke began to pour out of Fredrick's and Pinniger's room and little playful tongues of flame soon followed. The roof gave way enough to allow free play for the mass of fire which was now rolling the good things on Pinniger's shelves and the valuables in Fredrick's show cases under its thousand tongues. Free play and it went at its work like a young giant at base ball. For hours it kept at its work until nothing was left but

BRAVE MEN

they stood by and saw their years hardest toil wiped out like figures on a slate. McRae & Matheson stood next with a stock of drugs and medicines which represented their earthly all and saw it go up in smoke. S. N. Davidson one of Reno's finest business men had the east half of the r filled with jewelry and silver and when after watching for hours catch a glimpse of the first fiery tongue which bore the new through the massive iron was relieved from all uncert the bursting flames with some the emotions of the doomed who is the most collected amid best satisfied of the

by Marilyn Newton

"A beautiful little city sat at noon in the ashes stretching her scorched arms to heaven in prayers for help. A spark, a collection of houses and a terrific gale wind were all that were necessary to produce the great calamity. . . For six hours, boiling flames fed on her vitals, eating her limbs and drinking her blood."

This account describes Reno in the aftermath of the terrible fire of March 2, 1879, which left six people dead in its wake. The fire "swept the best part of Reno before it like the stubble of the field," according to a Reno Evening Gazette article the day after the blaze. Reno was only eleven years old but had already survived two other major fires. Each time she was rebuilt. For weeks the Gazette had been sending out a hue and cry about the possibilities of another major fire in an overcrowded business district with an inadequate water supply and improper chimneys. Early that Sunday morning, the inevitable happened.

Around 5:30 A.M., a man named Richardson on his way home from his job as a hotel night clerk noticed sparks and traced them to the stovepipe of a small house. Arousing the occupants, he advised them to extinguish their fire, then went on his way. The warning apparently was not heeded. Less than half an hour later, one Mrs. Ann Hogan found a fire in a pile of wood next to the two-story pine tenement building in which she lived. She rushed to a barrel of wash water near the wood, but was unable to open it. She was able to give the alarm, however, as the wind blowing from the southwest quickly fanned the sparks into a conflagration.

As the winds increased, the fire spread. "Sheets of flying fire were torn off and lit blocks away, wrapping themselves around doomed victims with deadly effect," the Gazette reported. The paper went on to say that "the Baptist Church was throwing up a blaze as high as Brother Arnold's prayers used to go and the smoke was rolling up from the whole south side as though all of Reno's sins were being wiped out by a fiery atonement."

The winds picked up force, taking with it a shower of sparks which rained down on the Truckee Meadows some distance away. A barn and hay located three miles from the blaze burned down. A little closer, fire and smoke mixed with dust and flying sand threatened to consume everything at the home of P. J. Kelly. "Sweeping over acres of ground with no note of warning, the fire caught several people in its dreadful embrace and life was extinguished," reported the Gazette.

Myron Lake was aboard a westbound train pulling into Reno and watched the town he founded go up in smoke. Six buildings he owned in the downtown area were destroyed.

As always happens during a catastrophe, rumors claiming great loss of life were rampant. Fortunately, most were untrue. Mrs. John Beck was not among the lucky ones, however. When the alarm was given, the fire was still two blocks from her and her husband's store on Commercial Row. Known as Old Mother Beck, she was about seventy years old and somewhat of a noted character. For some time she and her husband worked to save as many of their possessions as possible. As the flames reached their store, Beck left, calling for his wife to follow. Instead, she stayed and called for her husband to remove one last box. It was the last time she was seen alive. Her charred remains, an unrecognizable mass, were found where her husband had last seen her.

In the ashes of Johnny Boyd's barn, three limbless, charred trunks were found, and the remains of a hand led to

speculation that at least one and probably all were little more than lads. Two days later they were identified as John Phillian, 17, of St. Louis; Joe Kilpatrick, 16, of New York; and John Irwin, 18, of San Francisco. They were strangers to Reno but had been sleeping in the barn for the last two or three nights. Originally, it was reported they had been drinking, but there was nothing to substantiate it. All apparently died in their sleep. Another charred body was found in the flour mill. Because of the skull and other anatomical characteristics it is believed that the body was that of an Indian. His identity is not known.

The final casualty was Joe Crews, who owned the Opera House and Billiard Parlor. After saving some of his stock of wine and liquor and noting the fire was almost upon him, he tried one last attempt to save valuable papers. He reached the middle of the room, but by that time the heat was intense. He fell over a billiard table, blinded by smoke, but he knew he had to make it through the flames or perish. Making a dash, he reached the sidewalk only to fall on a burning woodpile. He was seriously burned about the head and upper body, and his condition deteriorated during the next few days. Crews had apparently also suffered internal injuries. He died on March 10.

One newspaper account said firemen who responded to the fire were drunk, but that was quickly refuted by the Gazette, which reported that some persons who were drunk donned fire helmets, but that none of the 35 regular Reno firemen were under the influence when they responded. In fact, the Reno Fire Department was in full force within seven minutes of the first alarm and was throwing water not five minutes later. Tales of heroism by these brave men were reported for several days following the fire. How fireman Hank

Rhodes went blind from heat and smoke and finally had to be replaced by Herman Thyes about 8 A.M. How Thyes stood by and directed teams for another eight hours until he was too blind to see. How another fireman stood by his post and watched as his home was destroyed by the fingers of fire that quickly enveloped the town.

But firemen weren't the only heroes to emerge. Al Lyman, locomotive engineer for No. 48, watched helplessly as the fire neared his house with his wife and children inside. But not once did he consider abandoning the pumps. He told a man nearby that he didn't know if his house was burning but he couldn't leave to attend them. Instead, he fought the fire until his cab began to burn and he was forced to give up the fight. In the end, his home and family were spared although all of his neighbor's homes burned down. There were also many nameless individuals who gave of themselves and donated wagons and other conveyances to help victims remove as many of their possessions as possible.

But fires do strange things to people, and not all act heroically. There were also many who were greedy, and concerned only with their own well-being. It seems that a cocked pistol can do much to make those people see the right way, however. In one instance, a teamster attempted to charge a man $5.00 for five minutes work hauling a few things out of the fire. When the man refused to pay, the teamster attempted to haul the furniture back into the fire. A drawn pistol prompted the safe unloading of the belongings. In another instance, a man called for the driver of a wagon to stop and take on a trunk and some bundles. When he responded he didn't have time, a cocked pistol persuaded him otherwise.

As the fire continued to rage, even those brick buildings thought to be fireproof finally gave way. Lachman's Clothing Store and the drug store next

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door roasted for two hours, and it was thought they would be saved. Then smoke began pouring out and "playful fingers of flames followed." For hours the flames roared until only blackened brick walls and twisted doors remained. Down on Virginia Street, goods from businesses were moved into the Farmer's Co-op building, where it was hoped the fire would be halted. That was not to be. "A sea of fire flowed in and flooded the block," reporters wrote. "All west of Virginia was rolling toward Heaven. Chunks of burning wood swept across a block and a half and kindled Coats' Pollard Hotel. Soon all in between was in the grasp of a hungry field. It soon clasped Chamberlain's lath frame (Depot Hotel) in its arms and entwined its fingers around cupolas and cornices like a lover toying with his sweethearts ringlets," Gazette accounts reported. Burning east and west, the fire was sweeping and surging, tossed and fanned by the fearful wind, which had never blown so hard in Washoe. "The (Virginia and Truckee Railroad) warehouse was a plaything for the great destroyer. Rows of dwellings east of Virginia Street were merely a momentary digression. The Catholic School was the real object and all the little houses at its feet were simply bait thrown out for the fiery devil," said the paper. The school stood for a time but went at last, as did almost every other building in the downtown area, bordered roughly by Second, Sierra, Plaza and Center Streets.

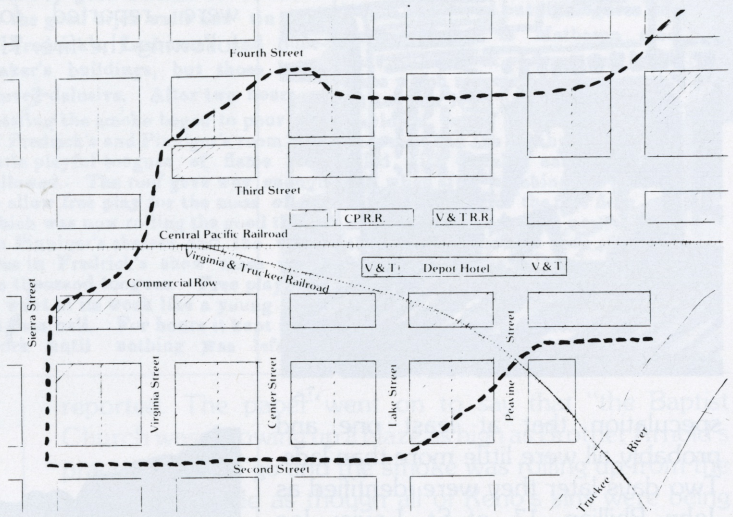
Two downtown grocery stores which had survived an earlier blaze in 1873 remained relatively intact. Conversely, Coleman and Pechner suffered their third loss to fires. Never ones to give up, they were in business again within three days.

The embers were still glowing red when looting began. One account tells of Dave McFarland and his wife going through the rubble of their arcade looking for valuable jewelry. Finding some in his basement, he passed them to his wife waiting above. She, in turn, placed them in her dolman. Suddenly, she felt a tug and found a tramp in the act of pocketing several pieces. A scream got a quick response from her husband, who captured the thief. Another time, a constable chased two suspected thieves and was forced to club one into submission. Those caught plundering were dealt with quickly and usually harshly by the judges who, within days, sentenced most to jail.

In most cases, though, people were charitable and goodhearted. The fire had been raging for only two hours when a special train arrived from Truckee bringing with it water cars and plenty of helping hands. The flames hadn't yet begun to subside when neighboring communities like Virginia City formed committees and began dispatching enough cooked food to feed all who were suffering, as well as blankets and clothing for those left homeless. But while the people of the Comstock were helping Reno, they were having their own problems. The day after the Reno Fire, a fire broke out in Silver City destroying 16 buildings, including the jail. Still, they continued to send aid to Reno. On March 3, the state

Map of burned district in Reno

The shaded area indicates the area destroyed.



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legislature drafted a bill allocating $10,000 relief for the town. Within twenty minutes of the first reading, it was passed and signed by the governor.

In the face of disaster, the town was able to maintain a semblance of humor, although the following Gazette excerpts about Virginia Chronicle editor Sam Davis obviously had an ulterior motive: "It was generally supposed that Sam Davis' presence was the cause of the fire. Reno was wicked enough before, but Sam's aggregated sinfulness was too much and the Lord rained down fire." A few days later, the paper said,"There is no truth to the report that Sam Davis of the Chronicle set the fire in Reno for the purpose of diverting attention from the losing fight the Chronicle was making against the railroads."

RENO IN ASHES.

The Business Portion of the Town Destroyed.

Several Persons Burned to Death.

The Loss Estimated at One Million of Dollars.

A Frightful Picture of Ruin and Confusion.

Newspaper headlines reflected the seriousness of the 1879 catastrophe.

Nevada Historical Society

For three weeks, burned out portions of the city continued to smolder. But that did little to deter the determined businessmen, who the day after the blaze were already beginning to build anew. Daily, the newspapers reported progress of these endeavors and soon Reno turned once again into a thriving community. Over the years, even to the present day, fires have plagued Reno, especially its downtown area, but never has one matched the destructiveness of the disaster of 1879.

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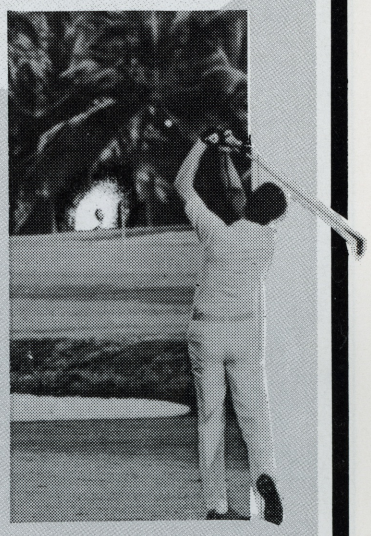
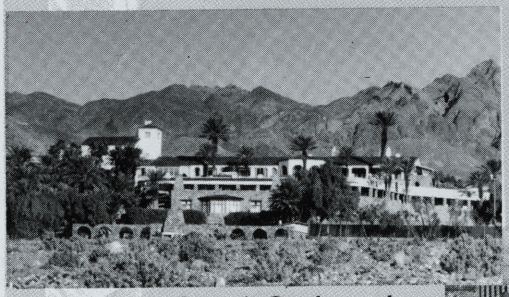
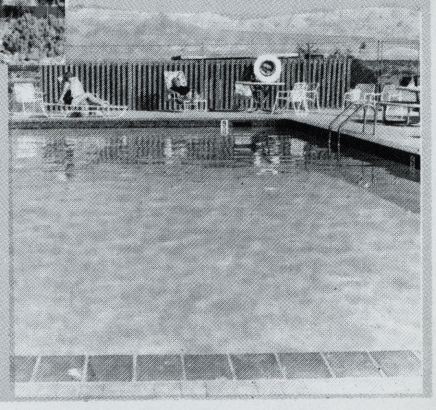


Hospitality by Fred Harvey



Scotty's Castle nearby



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Sierra Wildlife

T U L E E L K

free-roaming in the Owens Valley

Text and photos by Mike McWherter

Just before entering Lone Pine from the south, the sign on Highway 395 said "Elk." I had seen the sign many times before but never any elk, so I wondered if it was true. About an hour later, just south of Big Pine and near Tinemaha Reservoir, I saw another sign which pointed the way to a Wildlife Viewpoint. I decided to give it a try. A dirt road led to the top of a little hill, from where I scanned the flatlands below and saw a group of large animals in a farmer's alfalfa field. I got a closer look at them through a pair of binoculars, and saw that they were tule elk.

I decided to leave the hill and drive north along 395 in the hope of getting close enough for some pictures. When I found them they were still in the farmer's alfalfa field. My eyes immediately focused on the group's largest member, a bull with a single antler. He was a powerful and magnificent creature, perhaps 500 pounds, five feet at his shoulders, his head rising another two feet. Nearby was a group of eight smaller females (cows) and immatures. When I tried to approach the herd on foot the big bull became nervous and fled by jumping an irrigation device in his path. Soon the cows and immatures followed.

It was difficult for me to believe that only a hundred years ago these spectacular animals roamed in great numbers throughout much of California—and in a matter of a few decades were hunted to near extinction. It is reassuring to know that they were spared this fate through the efforts of many thoughtful individuals and organizations. But even today the effort to sustain them in viable numbers has not been without its problems and controversy. Although tule elk are not native to the Owens Valley, having been introduced in the early 1930's, they adapted well to their new home and now are the largest free-roaming population in California.

American elk once ranged from northern Canada to southern New Mexico, from Massachusetts and North Carolina to the California coast, from elevations above timber line to sea level. The extent of their range even exceeded that of the antelope and buffalo.

The tule elk (*Cervus elaphus nannodes)* are one of three varieties which currently inhabit North America. Another race, the Roosevelt elk *(Cervus elaphus roosevelti)*, are found in northwest California, and western Oregon and Washington. These are the largest of North American elk. The third variety is the Rocky Mountain elk *(Cervus elaphus nelsoni)*, somewhat larger than the tule elk, found in the Rocky Mountains and Great Basin area. A fourth variety *(Cervus elaphus canadensis)*, inhabited the east but was hunted to extinction, the last one killed probably in 1867.

Bull tule elk are big animals weighing about 550 pounds. Females weigh about 410 pounds. Under natural conditions elk will form herds from forty to sixty animals. In the spring they shed their buff-colored winter

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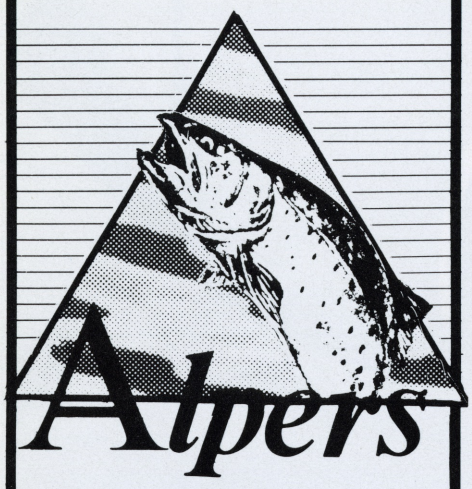

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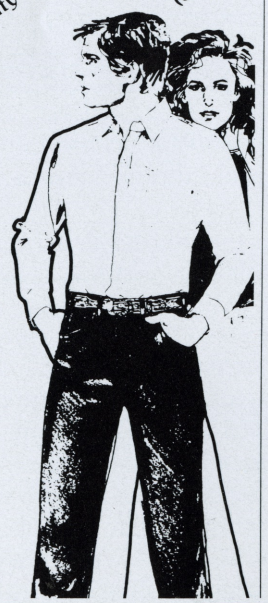

coats, replacing them with sleek, reddish ones. During this time the bulls cast off their antlers. In place of these, small velvety knobs develop which will eventually grow into a new set of antlers. The velvet is shed in late July or early August. The younger bulls have smaller antlers with fewer tines; a one year old bull will have antlers with only a single tine.

In July, while still in velvet, adult bulls prepare for the rut by joining the cow and immatures. The rut or breeding season occurs from about August to October with bulls engaging in much bugling and antler thrashing. Their antlers, polished and sharp, are potentially dangerous weapons, but the bulls seldom harm one another. Eventually a dominant bull will establish a harem by driving all other bulls out of the herd, a task that requires the expenditure of much energy.

About eight months after mating, in April and May, the cows give birth to their calves. These calves, weighing 20 to 25 pounds, are born spotted, nature's "camouflage" to protect them against predators. In times past, when the grizzly roamed California, and the mountain lion existed in greater numbers, these large predators were the elk's major enemies. Since the grizzly has been extinct in California since the early 1920's and the mountain lion's numbers are considerably reduced, elk populations are limited today primarily by lack of habitat. The newborn will rapidly gain strength in its legs and soon be following its mother. For the first few weeks it will live off her milk. Later it will begin a vegetable diet, but continue to take milk supplements from its mother until about September. By this time it will have lost its spots.

During the 1700's, Spanish mission settlements and rancheros had little effect on tule elk populations. Vast herds roamed relatively undisturbed in the Central and Coastal valleys of California. But this could not last. During the early 1800's tule elk began to feel the pressure of a rising hide and tallow trade. The native grasses which provided the elk's sustenance began to decline as more aggressive European varieties, introduced from early settlers, took over. Domestic cattle and horses sought the same forage needed by the elk. Then "fur-brigades," large bands of professional hunters, put even greater pressure on the tule elk, driving them from the open prairies to the tules.

Despite the pressures of the early 1800's, elk were still found in great numbers. However, tule elk began a rapid decline soon after the discovery of gold in California in 1848. With the great influx of people the following year there was a tremendous demand for tule elk as food. Elk of the Sacramento Valley were probably the first to go. In a matter of a few years elk which were once seen in the open areas of the San Joaquin Valley were gone. By 1863 they were confined to the willow and tule marshes between Buena Vista and Tulare Lakes. But with the construction of dikes and the draining of the marshes, the elk's last holdout was rapidly becoming agricultural land.

In the early 1850's the California State Legislature, alarmed by the rapid decline of elk, passed laws giving elk protection, but with no enforcement of these laws elk continued to decline. In 1873 all hunting of tule elk was banned, but by then there was great doubt that any elk survived.

A few years after tule elk received full protection a pair was seen in the tule marshes near Buena Vista Lake. It is quite possible that these were the last of the tule elk. In 1895, after twenty years of protection, only 28 tule elk existed in the world. Most of these animals ranged on the land of the Miller and Lux cattle empire. Henry Miller played a vital role in the survival of tule elk by ordering his employees to protect them. The elk increased in number and by 1914 it was estimated that they were doing between $5,000 and $10,000 a year of agricultural damage. Miller continued to protect the elk despite their damage. He wanted to see the elk survive, and with the help of concerned organizations attempted to relocate elk to various parks and zoos. One such relocation was to Yosemite National Park in 1921. Originally Yosemite received 13 elk, and by 1933 their numbers had increased to 27. The U.S. Park Service had gone on record as opposing the exhibition of caged or non-native animals in parks. But if the Park Service did not want the elk, what could be done with them?

At a meeting of the California State

Chamber of Commerce in 1932 G. Walter Dow, a hotel owner and resident of Lone Pine, suggested the Owens Valley as an ideal site on the basis of habitat, ownership, use, and acceptance by the Owens Valley people. The land in the Owens Valley was largely public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management, National Forest Service, and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. With the exception of agricultural interests all groups and individuals concerned lent their support to the proposal. Mr. Dow covered the expense of building crates for the elk. Water and Power workers volunteered their own time. Corrals were built near Aberdeen to receive the elk and in October of 1933, 27 elk from Yosemite were moved to the Owens Valley.

The elk thrived in their new home. But on the other side of the Sierra, in the San Joaquin Valley, Kern County elk were experiencing crowded conditions. Once again people of the Owens Valley worked with government agencies and in 1934, 28 elk from Kern County were moved to the Owens Valley bringing the total to 54. Although the Owens Valley had never been part of the tule elk's original range they adapted extremely well.

As elk numbers in the Owens Valley increased, so did the complaints from agricultural interests about damage to forage and fences. They demanded relief. A controversy existed between agricultural interests and those who sought protection for the elk. The California Fish and Game Commission adopted a compromise which would insure survival of the elk and give some relief for the damage they caused. Elk in the Owens Valley were to be held at a somewhat arbitrary number of 250 to 300. In 1943 the first legal hunt since 1873 was allowed. Subsequent hunts were allowed up to 1969 but were discontinued due to public opposition. In 1971 the Committee for the Preservation of Tule Elk played a large part in having state legislation passed which prohibited legal hunts until the statewide population reached 2,000. The number of elk allowed to inhabit the Owens Valley was set at 490 or any greater number to be determined by the carrying capacity of the habitat.

continued on page 59

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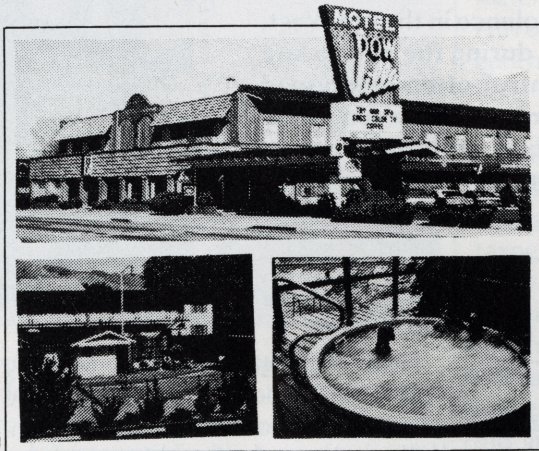

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VIOLENCE ON THE FRONTIER

Dr. Roger D. McGrath's book, GUNFIGHTERS, HIGHWAYMEN, AND VIGILANTES: *Violence on the Frontier*, has received remarkable acclaim since its release last year. The book has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, the Bancroft Prize, and the Frederick Jackson Turner Award, among other prestigious awards and prizes. It has received favorable reviews from the New York Times, California Magazine, and a variety of other publications. Last December, Bill Moyers did a commentary specifically about the book on the CBS Evening News.

Dr. McGrath, who teaches history at U.C.L.A., has done exhaustive research on violence in the old West, focusing on Bodie and Aurora during the mid to late 1800's. The "trans-Sierra country" often mentioned refers to the Eastern Sierra region between Little Lake and Reno. SIERRA LIFE is proud to present excerpts from this outstanding historical work.

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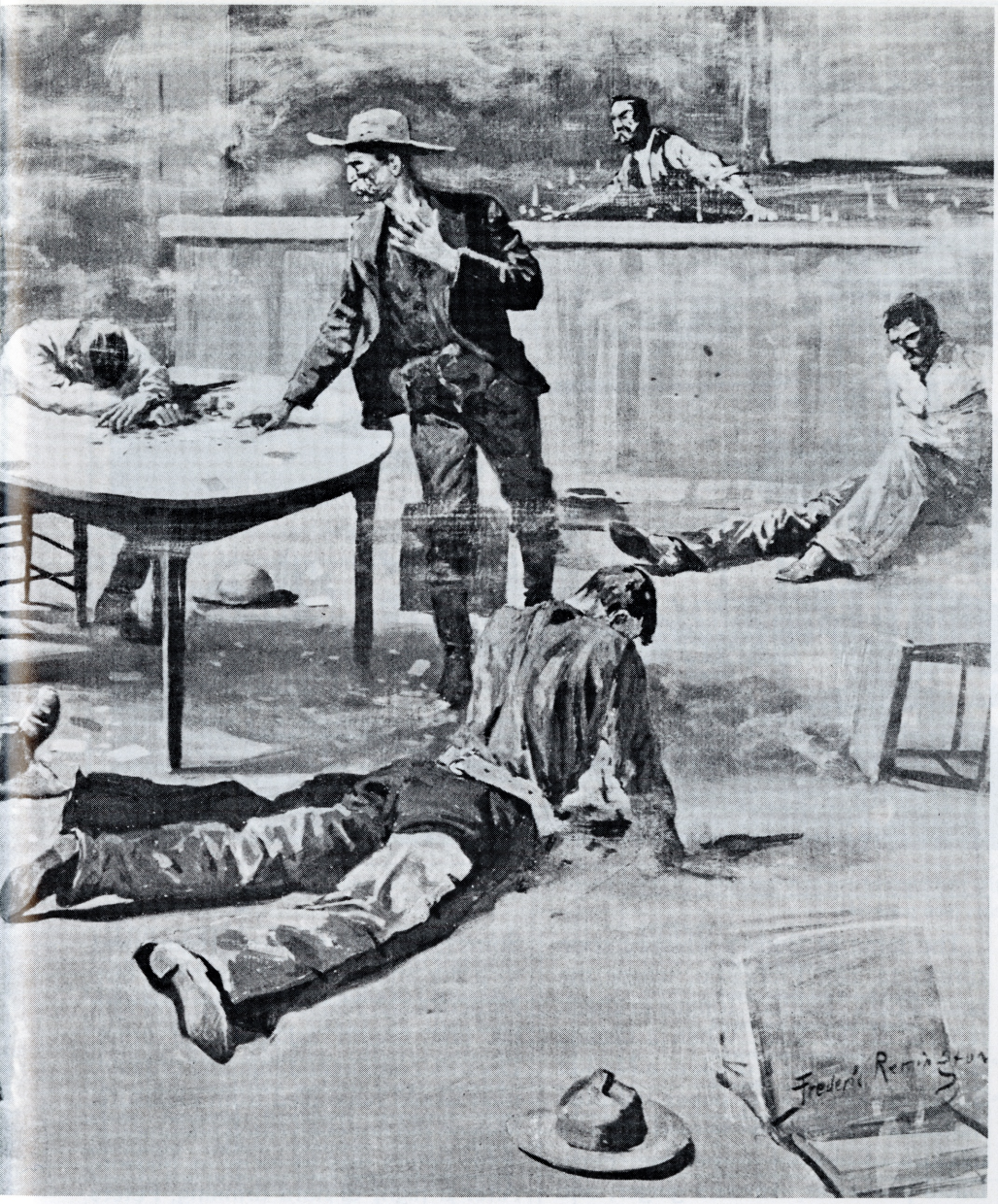
By Roger D. McGrath

It was a common remark in Aurora that Irish-born John E. Campbell was as "brave as a lion." He was well known for his barroom brawls and for his near-duel with John Gorman. The *Aurora Times* described Campbell as an honest and industrious miner who was "warm hearted, generous, outspoken and manly; but, unfortunately, like so many of his countrymen, high-tempered and impulsive to rashness." By virtue of hard work, Campbell had acquired some property and had interests in several mines. His hard work during the day was occasionally followed by a spree at night. On such occasions he was a terror.

Near midnight on the Monday evening of 6 June 1864 Campbell strode into the Del Monte Exchange saloon. Within minutes he found himself in an argument with H. T. Parlin, a large and powerful miner. Both men reached for their guns. Campbell's quicker draw enabled him to fire first. A split second later Parlin fired. Both of their shots missed. Before Campbell could fire again Parlin grabbed him and, using a six-shooter as a club, split his scalp open with several terrific blows. But Campbell "never flinched in the least" and, fighting back, refused to be knocked down. He desperately tried to fire his gun, but the revolver's cylinder had jammed after the first shot. The struggle continued until Parlin backed Campbell over a barrel. With his gun hand now free, Parlin fired twice. The first shot hit Campbell in the side and the second in the stomach.

Bystanders now intervened. Despite a lacerated scalp, a possible fractured skull, and two gunshot wounds, Campbell got to his feet and asked to renew the fight. But the fight was over for Campbell. Less than four hours later he died as a result of the injuries he had received. He was coherent and brave to the very end and said before his death that he regretted only not having killed Parlin. "Few men," said the *Aurora Times* in referring to Campbell, "possessed a higher degree of physical courage."

Parlin surrendered himself to the authorities and on Tuesday afternoon a coroner's inquest was held. The coroner's jury, reasoning that Parlin



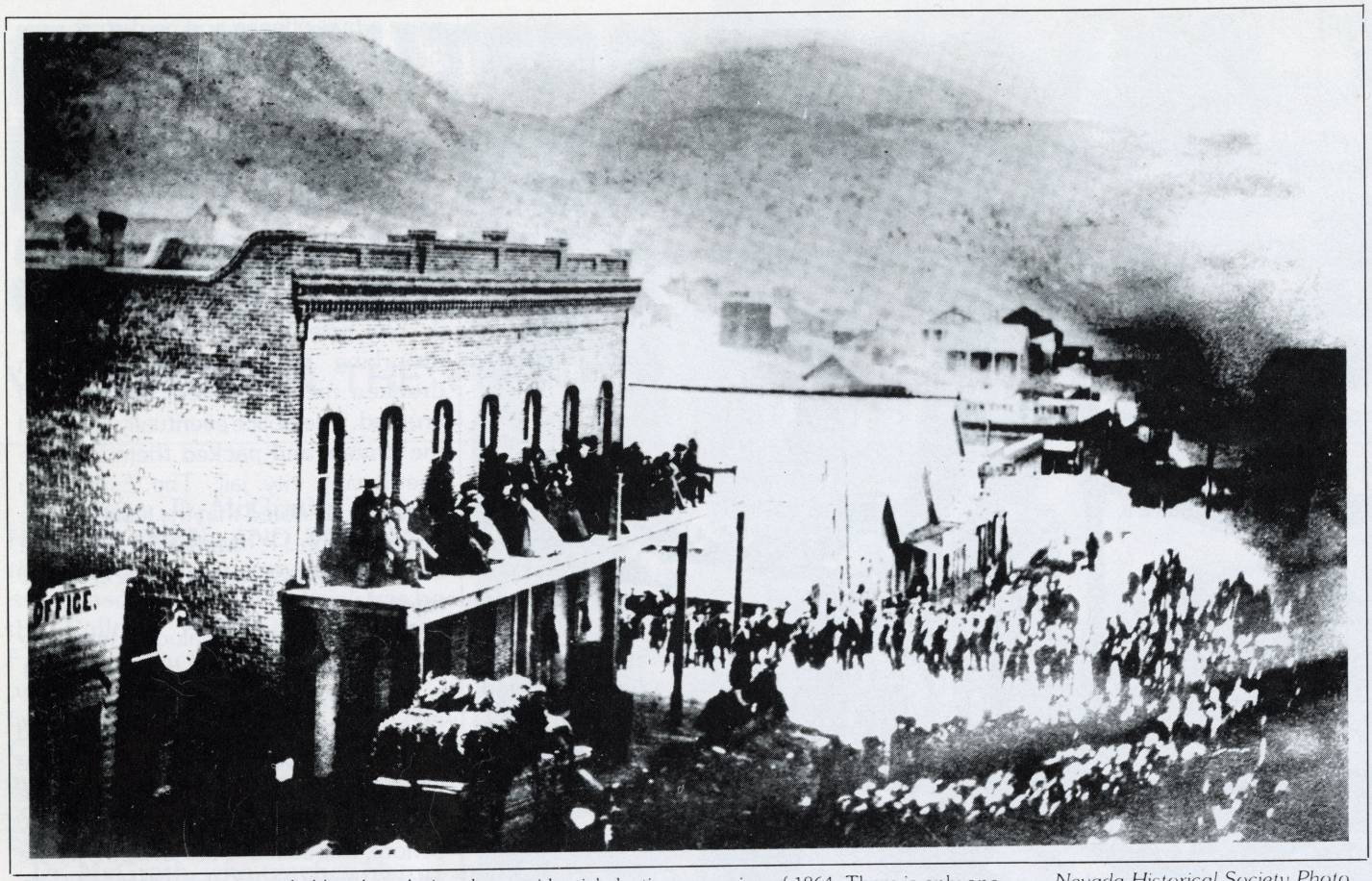
had acted in self-defense, rendered a verdict of justifiable homicide and Parlin was released from custody.

The gun (was) the weapon for settling personal disputes resulting from affronts, insults, challenges, feuds, or gang loyalty. Lee Vining may have been the first Auroran shot to death in a personal dispute. Vining, a scion of an Indiana Quaker family, erected a sawmill on the creek that now bears his name and began supplying Aurora with lumber in 1861. One night in the Exchange saloon some trouble started. The report of a gun was heard. Everyone dived for cover or ran for the street. When the commotion subsided, Vining was found lying dead on the wooden sidewalk in front of the saloon. He had been shot in the groin—the round evidently severed an artery—and had quickly bled to death. An examination indicated that a gun in his pocket had inflicted the fatal wound. Whether Vining had accidently fired the gun prematurely while pulling it out of his pocket to shoot someone else, or whether the gun had discharged during a struggle, remains a mystery.

Various forms of rowdyism, including drunk and disorderly conduct, target practice in the city streets, and fistfights, were common in Aurora. Drunks not infrequently passed out on Aurora streets and usually wound up spending the night in the city jail. If it were a first offense and no disturbance had been made, the drunk was simply released the next morning. However, if the drunk had created a disturbance or was a habitual offender, he could expect an appearance before the justice of the peace and a fine of $15 or $20. Occasionally the arresting officer would encounter more serious trouble. In August 1864, when Deputy Sheriff H. J. Teel arrested Charles Gillespie for disturbing the peace, a half-dozen drunken men interfered, and a brawl erupted. The police eventually subdued the drunks and packed them into the overflowing city jail. The *Esmeralda Union* wryly noted that the justice of the peace, John T. Moore, "will do a thriving business during the next two or three days."

Some twenty-five saloons kept the "boys" well watered, so it is no wonder that "drunk and disorderly conduct" was a common charge. Aurorans loved to drink and were suspicious of anyone who did not. Thomas R. Chapin, the superintendent of an Aurora Sunday school, was called "Miss Chapin" by the miners because he was a non-drinker. Aurora drinkers imbibed such enormous quantities of alcohol that they more than doubled the price of eggs when eggnog was in season. Fortified with a few drinks, Aurorans would stagger out of the saloons and engage in pistol practice at any available target. "The boys," noted one Auroran, "have a reprehensible practice of shooting at targets across the main street, a diversion not eminently calculated to soothe the nerves of one having occasion to cross the line of their fire. The terror thus inspired, however, is supposed to considerably enhance the fascination of the sport."

. . . Bodie, like Aurora, was home to an extraordinary number of saloons. Much of Main Street was lined with saloons, nearly fifty in all, or about one for every hundred Bodie men. The *Bodie Standard*, on 19 October 1879, said it believed that the street "has more saloons in a given length than any thorofare in the world." Their names indicated that Bodie was, indeed, an old-time mining camp: American Flag, Argonaut, Assessment, Aurora, Bank Exchange, Bonanza, Caledonian, Carson, Comstock, Delta, Dividend,



This photo of Aurora was probably taken during the presidential election campaign of 1864. There is only one other existing photo of Aurora during its boom years (see page 34). *Nevada Historical Society Photo*

Empire, Gold Brick...(etc.).

The better Bodie saloons, such as Patrick Gallagher's Shamrock or Dick McAlpin's Parlor, occupied a room some thirty feet wide and seventy-five or a hundred feet deep. A bar abutted one wall, and a "chop stand," specializing in fried chops, steaks, and ribs, ran along the other. Faro, twenty-one, red and black, draw poker, and roulette were the favorite games. A billiard table or two could also be found in many saloons.

The saloon was the most important social institution in Bodie. Bodie's saloons were crowded with men—women, including prostitutes, almost never ventured into the saloons—every night of the week. One Bodieite recalled that "nearly everybody drank, nearly everybody gambled." Besides serving imported "whiskies from Cork City, Ireland," as did Patrick Fahey's Mono Brewery, the saloons also served Bodie's own powerful home brew: a whiskey said to be made "from old boots, scraps of iron, snow-slides and climate, and it only takes a couple of 'snorts' to craze a man of ordinary brainpower."

The fame of Bodie's whiskey soon spread to San Francisco, where the newspapers printed tongue-in-cheek reports of the fluid. When a visiting Bodieite asked for a drink at a Market Street saloon, a local paper reported that the barkeeper served him a mixture of alcohol, turpentine, Perry Davis pain-killer, Jamaica ginger, and pepper sauce. The Bodieite downed the concoction without batting an eye and exclaimed, "Young man, that's whiskey. I ain't tasted nothin' like it since I left Bodie two weeks ago today. That's real genuine licker, kinder a cross 'tween a circular saw and a wildcat, that takes holt quick, en hols on long. Jus' you go to Bodie and open a saloon. And with that whiskey you might charge 4 bits a glass for it and the boys 'ud never kick."

Bodie's drinking stories are legion. There was the old alcoholic named Midson, who one winter night was thrown out of a saloon into the street. He toppled over into a snowbank and passed out. There he lay until some passerby discovered him the next morning. By then he was frozen solid and showed absolutely no signs of life. Some friends placed his rigid figure next to a fire and literally thawed him out. Miraculously, Midson revived and with his first breath asked for a drink. Doctors commented that any ordinary man would have died from exposure. Midson did not even catch pneumonia. John Peters was as lucky as Midson. After a night of hard drinking, Peters was groping his way home in the dark. Thoroughly drunk, he wandered off the trail and fell a hundred feet down a mine shaft. When discovered the next day, he was perfectly well except for a few bruises.

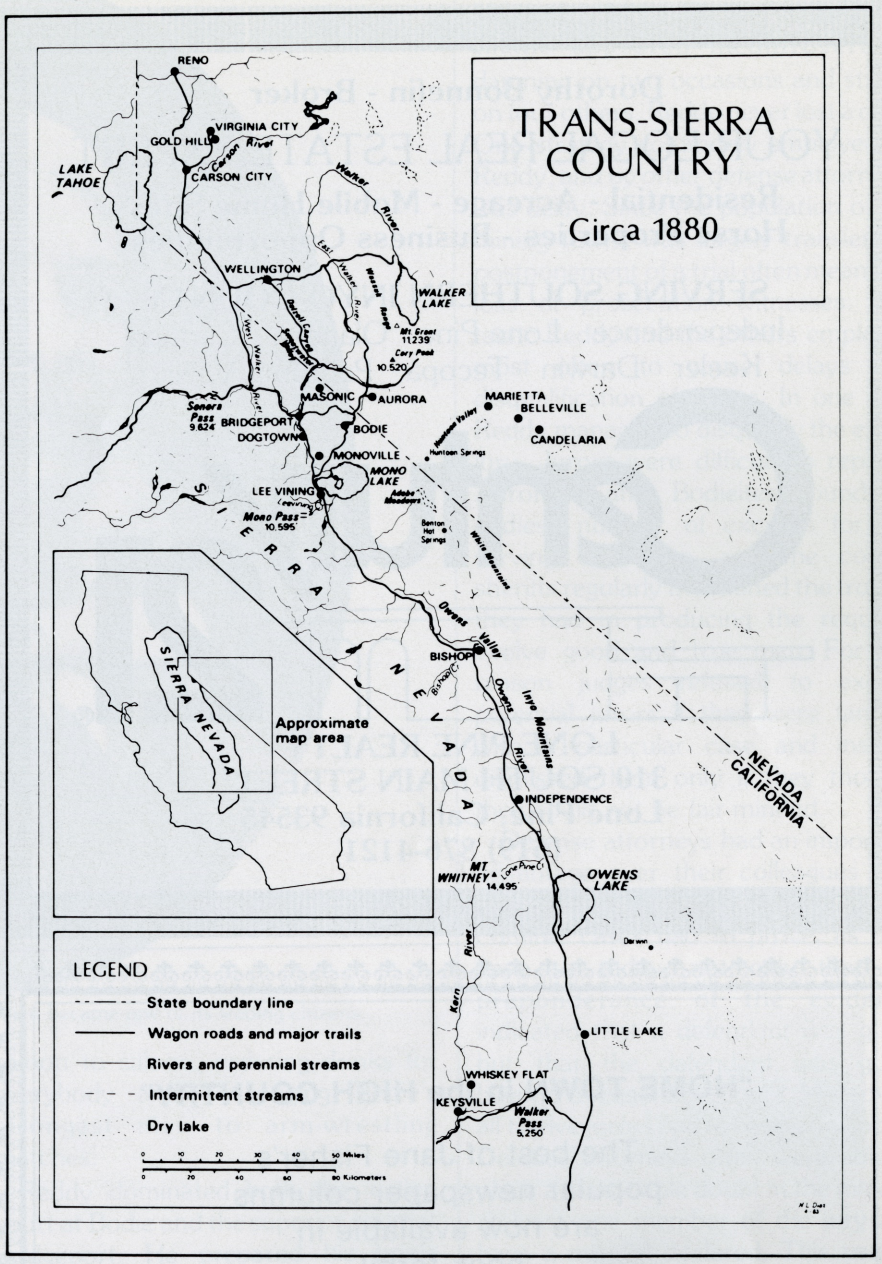
Just as puzzling to local physicians was the remarkable case of a Bodieite who became drunk without drinking. The man in question woke up perfectly sober the morning after a drunken night in the saloons. By midday, however, he felt himself growing gradually more intoxicated until by late afternoon he was roaring drunk again. Witnesses swore that he had not touched a drop of liquor that day. A story that stretches credulity even further tells of an "old stiff," renowned for his erudition in drinking matters, who was challenged to identify every drink put to his lips

while he was blindfolded. Different types of whiskey, brandy, gin, rum, and wine were all given to him. He identified every one. Then he was given a glass of water. He tasted it, smacked his lips, swirled it around in his mouth, and swallowed it. He did this several more times. Finally, he gave up in despair and admitted that the boys had stumped him; he could not identify the drink.

Occasionally, quantity rather than quality was the criterion involved in the challenge. A big, strong woodchopper named Logart, reputed to be a "hard-drinker," was challenged to the feat of downing three gills (nearly a pint) of whiskey without stopping. Bets were placed, and the contest began. Logart drank the whiskey down with apparent ease, but then was seized with convulsions and fell to the floor. He vomited and writhed in pain and "his face grew perfectly blue and white alternately." Medical aid was summoned, but the doctors were of little help. Logart lay insensible for another two hours before he finally recovered.

The early morning hours of Thursday, 13 June 1878, found Patrick Gallagher's Shamrock saloon crowded with men. Some stood at the bar drinking Irish whiskey, others were at the chop counter eating fried steaks, while several huddled around the gambling tables playing faro. Alex Nixon, the popular and powerfully built thirty-one-year-old, Irish-born president of the Bodie Miners' Union, treated the men at the bar to a round of drinks. When they had finished, Tom McDonald offered to buy the next round. But he found himself out of pocket change and asked the bartender, T. C. O'Brien, to lend him a dollar. Nixon objected and handed McDonald the dollar himself. The action offended McDonald. Heated words were exchanged, and then, when McDonald said he was the better man, Nixon unleashed a vicious blow that caught McDonald under the right eye and sent him tumbling to the floor.

Terrence Brodigan, a deputy constable and the son of one of the discoverers of Bodie's gold, grabbed Nixon from behind and tried to restrain him. The union president wheeled about and said, "Do you want any of it? Don't throw your hand behind you, for I am heeled. But I don't want any trouble with you for you are a constable." By now McDonald had gotten to his feet and was leaning against the bar. He said to Nixon, "It's pretty hard for a man to be knocked down, get a black eye and cut face for nothing." "You're a son of a bitch for letting me do it, even if I do weigh twenty pounds more than you," replied Nixon.



O'Brien, now out from behind the bar, seized McDonald by the arm, and officer Brodigan caught hold of Nixon. But Nixon struggled free and drew a revolver from his hip pocket. At the same time McDonald pulled his arm out of O'Brien's grasp. Both men opened fire. Nixon's first shot missed McDonald by inches, but McDonald's hit Nixon in the side. "My God, boys, I'm shot. Run for a doctor," exclaimed the big miner as he staggered back and fell to the floor. As he lay there with blood running out of a hole in his side, he fired two more shots at McDonald. They missed. One of the bullets was found the next day embedded in a head of cabbage in the restaurant next door. McDonald returned the fire. The

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rounds tore holes in the wooden planks of the Shamrock's floor but left Nixon untouched. It hardly mattered. Less than two hours later Nixon died from the effects of McDonald's first shot.

The legal profession was well represented in Bodie by attorneys Patrick Reddy, John McQuaid, Thomas P. Ryan, John Kittrell, Frank Owen, R. S. Minor, and more than a dozen others. Reddy, both literally and figuratively, stood head and shoulders above his colleagues. He was, as one Bodieite recalled, "easily the most striking figure in town." Reddy was large, powerfully built, and handsome. He had a commanding personality and was a born fighter and leader of men. . .

Reddy came to California in February 1861 and worked as a laborer in Contra Costa County and as a miner in Placer County, before he crossed into the trans-Sierra country in 1863. Virginia City, Aurora, Darwin, and Montgomery were some of the mining camps he lived in. His years in those camps were said to have been nothing less than wild and reckless: one contemporary went so far as to call him the "terror" of Aurora in 1863. The next year he was shot in the arm by an unknown assailant while walking down B Street in Virginia City. He lost the arm as a result of the wound, but he never lost his fighting spirit. Thirty-three years later, when he was nearly fifty-eight years old, he emerged from the state supreme court in Sacramento to see a number of people rushing out of the post office nearby. When one of those fleeing the building told Reddy that there was an armed man inside threatening to kill a woman, Reddy ran into the post office. He found the man, later identified as Peter Hulsman, standing over a woman and brandishing a revolver. One-armed Patrick Reddy lunged for the gun and grabbed it before Hulsman could fire. Another man then jumped on Hulsman's back. Hulsman, in a last desperate effort, tried to turn the gun on Reddy and fire. But Reddy jammed his thumb between the hammer and cylinder of the revolver as Hulsman cocked it and, when Hulsman pulled the trigger, the hammer fell on Reddy's thumb. Reddy

Photo courtesy of Phillip Earl

Patrick Reddy terrorized the Eastern Sierra, then became one of its leading citizens.

and the other man then wrestled Hulsman to the floor. After the police arrived, Reddy had his thumb, which was bleeding profusely, bandaged and, as the *San Francisco Call* put it, "continued on down the street as if nothing unusual had happenned."

Shortly after Reddy lost his arm—he would later call it a blessing in disguise—he married and began to study law. In 1867 he was admitted to the bar and began to practice law in Independence, a location that enabled him to attract business from the entire southern trans-Sierra region. Responding to the great boom at Bodie, he moved his practice there in April 1879 and by 1880 his law office occupied the entire top floor of the Molinelli Building on Main Street. The *Bodie Standard* called it "the most imposing law office outside of San Francisco." Although Reddy's dark auburn hair was beginning to turn white and he was gaining an ever more dignified appearance, he occasionally went on a spree. Then he would proceed from saloon to saloon, ordering drinks for everybody and challenging Bodie's strongest men to arm-wrestling matches.

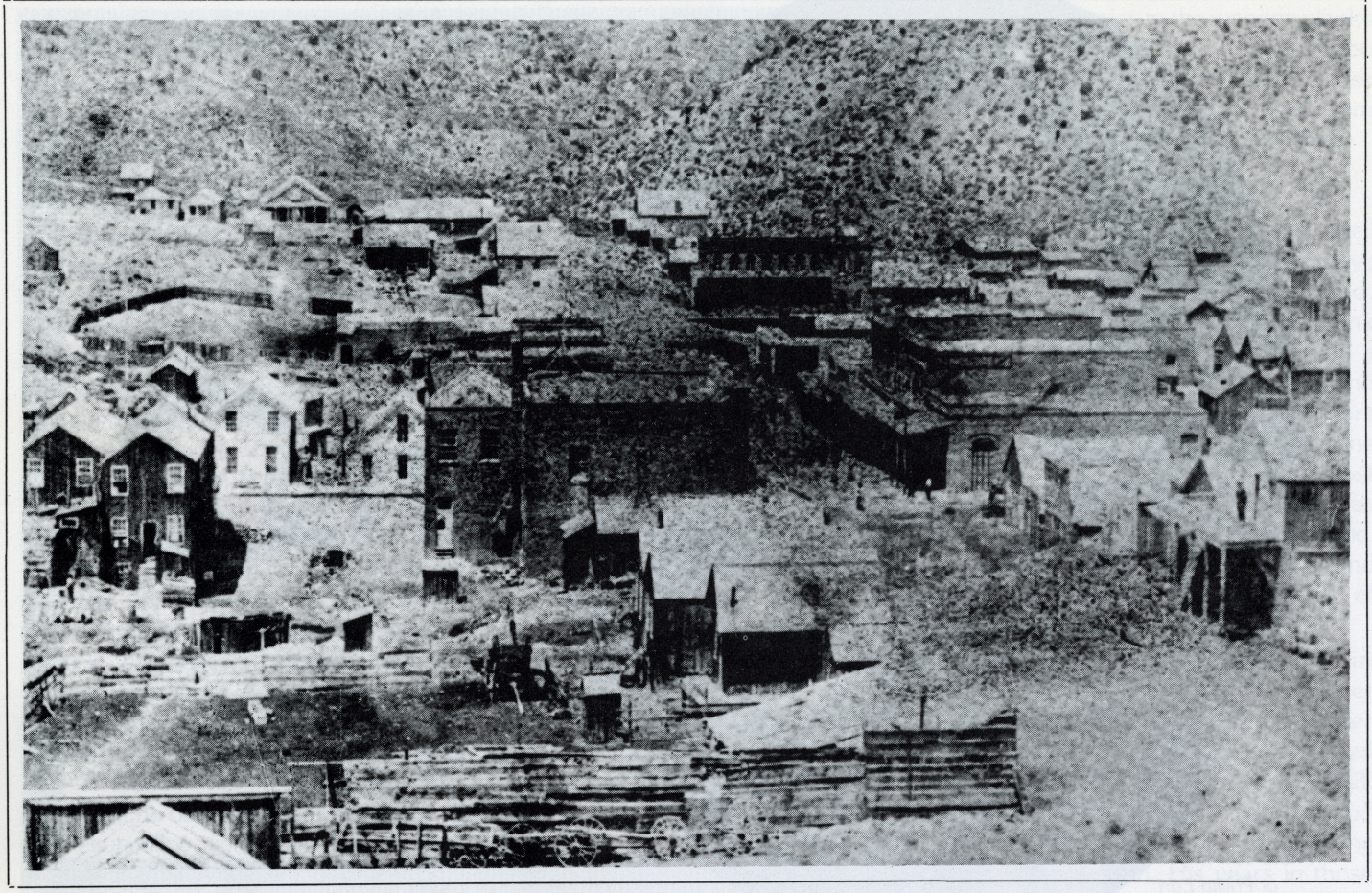
Reddy dominated both the justice court at Bodie and the superior court at Bridgeport. He prepared his briefs carefully, had almost total recall, and captivated judge and jury with a commanding voice, beautiful diction, and a lilting Irish brogue. Years later in San Francisco, law students would crowd into the courtroom to watch him perform. In Bodie, Reddy won the reputation of supporting the underdog. He donated his services to dozens of Bodieites who could not afford to pay him, while his wealthy clients were charged reasonably high fees. He was known to occasionally slip $20 gold pieces into the hands of destitute miners and to treat them to elegant dinners. . .

Reddy was unquestionably brilliant. (He) defended two men in justice court examinations and five men in superior court trials on charges of murder. Although the evidence against his clients appeared incontrovertibly damning on two occasions and strong on four others, Reddy never lost a case. One strategy commonly employed by Reddy, and by other defense attorneys, was delay. Since the population of the mining towns was largely transient, a postponement of a trial often meant the loss of prosecution witnesses. The tactic Reddy and the others employed most often to cause delays was disqualification of jurors. In one case Reddy managed to disqualify the entire jury. Jurors were difficult to replace. Aurorans and Bodieites found an endless number of excuses for not serving as jurors, and the county sheriffs regularly mentioned the trouble they had in producing the requisite twelve good and true men. For this reason judges refused to excuse potential jurors if they were familiar with a particular case and instead dismissed them only if they thought they could not be fair-minded.

Defense attorneys had an important advantage over their colleagues who represented the state. Prosecutors in criminal cases had to prove, as they have to today, not only that the preponderance of the evidence indicated that a defendant was guilty but that the defendant was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Moreover, all twelve jurors had to be so convinced. Defense attorneys often were able to place a reasonable doubt in the mind of at least one member of the jury and have a mistrial declared. This usually meant months of delay. . .

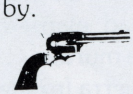
Also working to the advantage of the defense was the attitude of Aurorans and Bodieites. They thought that a man was fully justified in killing another man if that other man had threatened the first man's life. This held true even if some time had elapsed between the threat and the murder. . . Since the men of the trans-Sierra frontier were known to be men of their word, there was no such thing as an idle threat. Also, since fights were serious business and often proved fatal, any move that a man made during a confrontation which the other man involved in the dispute might interpret as a move for a gun justified that other man's drawing his gun and firing.

If the attitude of the people and the



Downtown Aurora, circa 1865. *Nevada Historical Society Photo*

law itself stacked the odds in favor of the defense, so too did the attorneys themselves. The most capable attorneys were in private practice and not, except when pressed into service, in the employ of the state. The defense attorneys regularly outshone the prosecutors. Reddy's performances in court were legendary. Known for his devastating cross-examinations of prosecution witnesses, he was also known to quote the law to the prosecutors, a tactic that brought roars of approval from spectators and left prosecutors chagrined. On the trans-Sierra frontier murder convictions were hard to come by.



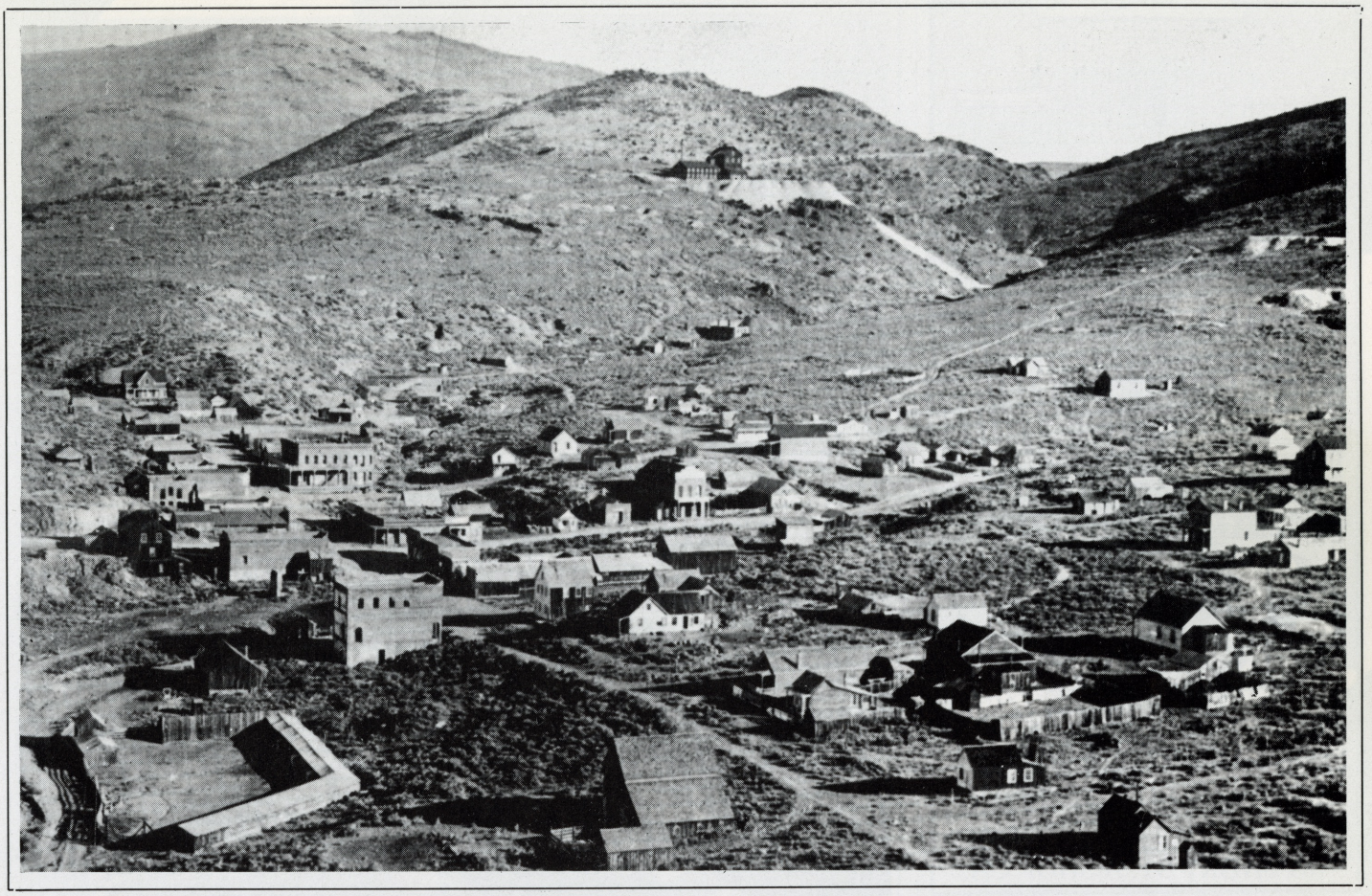
Sam Chung was the Chinese badman of Bodie. Chung, a member of the Yung Wah tong, spoke fluent English and had forsaken the traditional Chinese queue and dress for an American haircut and Western clothes. Because of his bilingual fluency, he often acted as an interpreter for justice and superior courts in cases involving Chinese. Chung was also Chinatown's leading businessman, owning a two-story building that contained a lodging house, restaurant, and laundry on King Street. It was this building, in fact, that first brought Chung notoriety.

Late one Tuesday night in mid-February of 1878, a fire broke out in Chung's building, and within minutes it was engulfed in flames. Although volunteer firefighters rushed to the scene, they could do nothing more than save the surrounding buildings. It was thought that a defective stovepipe in the roof of the kitchen had caused the conflagration.

All was not lost for Chung. He had wisely insured the building for fire and collected $5,000. The insurance company, not convinced that the fire was accidental, quietly began an investigation. In July 1878, Chung, along with two accomplices, was arrested for setting fire to his own building. The Mono County district attorney, relying on information provided by the Board of Underwriters of San Francisco, claimed that he had "evidence which will undoubtedly convict all of them." The evidence must have been less than convincing. During the next two weeks Chung's attorney, John McQuaid, succeeded in having charges against all three defendants dropped.

Sam Chung made headlines again when he shot and wounded Sam Wang, an opium den proprietor, and Ah Goon, on the Tuesday afternoon of 25 March 1879. Chung disappeared from the scene of the shooting before police arrived, but he was later identified as the shooter and arrested. He was charged with assault with intent to commit murder and remanded by justice court to the custody of the sherriff. Unable to post bail of $3,000, Chung was taken off to the county jail at Bridgeport. A month later he was indicted by the grand jury. But John McQuaid, again serving as Chung's attorney, got the case against Chung dismissed and he was released.

Chung was soon back at work, which now included vegetable farming behind his cabin on Rough Creek. Early on the Friday morning of 9 July 1880, Prudencia Encinos, "a well known and much respected Mexican," was driving



By 1889, the town of Aurora had shrunk considerably. *Nevada Historical Society Photo*

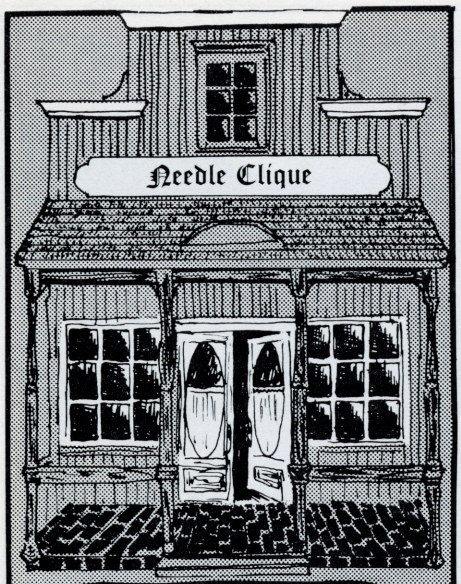
his wood-laden mules by Chung's cabin when some of the mules strayed into Chung's vegetable garden. Chung flew into a rage, grabbed a double-barrelled shotgun, and blasted Encinos. Encinos was rushed to a doctor, but the wounded Mexican died that night.

Chung was arrested and lodged in the Bodie jail. When rumor spread that a party of vigilantes were planning to take him, Constable John Kirgan shackled Chung to a deputy and, under the cover of darkness, sent the pair to Bridgeport. A short time later, a dozen masked Mexicans arrived at the jail. Four of them rushed into the jail's front office and, brandishing revolvers, demanded that Kirgan hand over Sam Chung. Kirgan told them that Chung had been taken into the mountains and was heavily guarded. The Mexicans ordered the door to the cells opened and did not leave until they had identified each prisoner.

Sam Chung, safe in the jail at Bridgeport, retained Patrick Reddy as his attorney. In August, Chung was brought to trial in superior court. He appeared to have no chance of acquittal. "There is no doubt in the mind of any person at all familiar with the circumstances of the killing," commented the *Bodie Standard*, "that Sam Chung committed an unprovoked, cold-blooded and barbarous murder." In a brilliant forensic display, Patrick Reddy put doubt in the minds of the jurors. The trial ended in a hung jury.

The prosecution moved to have Chung retried, and he was indicted for murder a second time on 24 August. Through deft legal maneuvers Reddy was able to delay Chung's retrial until April 1881. The delay, as usual, proved beneficial for the defense. In the intervening time one key prosecution witness had died and another had left the state. The jury was again unable to reach a verdict, six jurors standing for acquittal and six for conviction. The prosecution, now believing that it would be impossible to win a conviction and that another trial would be an unjustified expense, asked the court to dismiss the charges against Chung. The motion was denied and Chung went to trial for a third time in mid-June 1881. This time the jury returned a unanimous verdict of not guilty. Patrick Reddy had been his usual overwhelming self. "It is hardly necessary to state," said the *Bodie Standard,* "that in this Chinaman's case justice has not been done, neither has public sentiment been satisfied. But this is nothing new in Mono County, and now it only remains for Chung to settle down, behave himself and become a good American." He may have done just that. Never again did Sam Chung's name appear in Bodie newspapers or Mono County court records.

It would seem that in both Aurora and Bodie more robberies might have occurred if the citizens had not gone about armed and ready to fight. It is revealing that nearly all robbery victims were staggering drunk when attacked. A man in anything resembling a sober state was simply too dangerous to rob. The presence of police officers patrolling the streets at night may also have deterred some robbers, although



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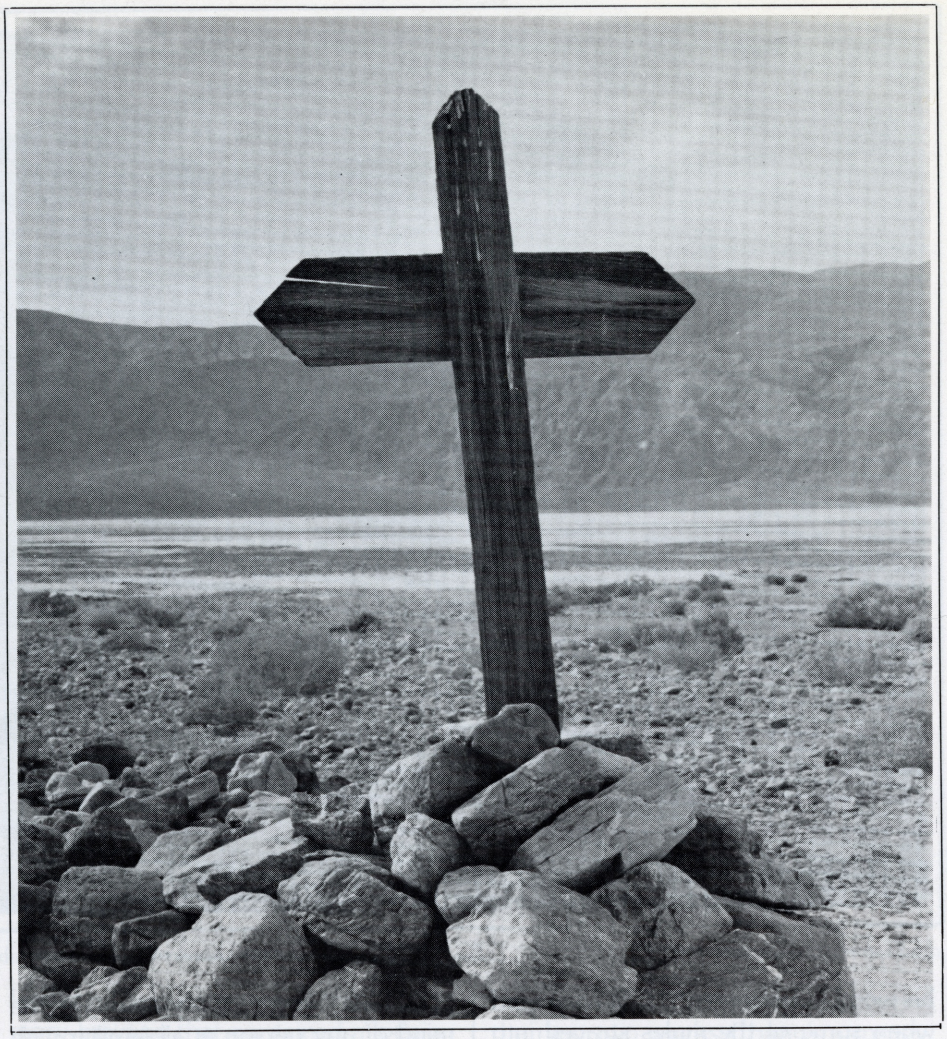

no officer in Bodie ever made an arrest of a robber or came to the rescue of a robbery victim, and several officers were dismissed from duty for alleged cooperation with robbers. . .

Several factors would appear to be responsible for the high rates of homicide in Aurora and Bodie. First, the town's populations were composed mostly of young, healthy, adventurous, single males who adhered to a code of conduct that required a man to stand and fight, even if, or perhaps especially if, it could mean death. Courage was admired above all else. Ironically, these men had come to the West for a materialistic end—to strike it rich—and yet their value structure emphasized the nonmaterialistic values of honor, pride, and courage. Alcohol played a major role as well. These men imbibed prodigious quantities of whiskey. Sobriety was thought proper only for Sunday school teachers and women.

If the character of the men and their consumption of alcohol made fighting inevitable, then their side arms often made fighting fatal. While the carrying of guns probably reduced the incidence of robbery, burglary, and theft, it undoubtedly increased the number of homicides. Although a couple of homicides resulted from beatings and a few from stabbings, the great majority resulted from shootings. With or without the gun, Aurorans and Bodieites would still have fought, but without the gun their fights would not have been so deadly.

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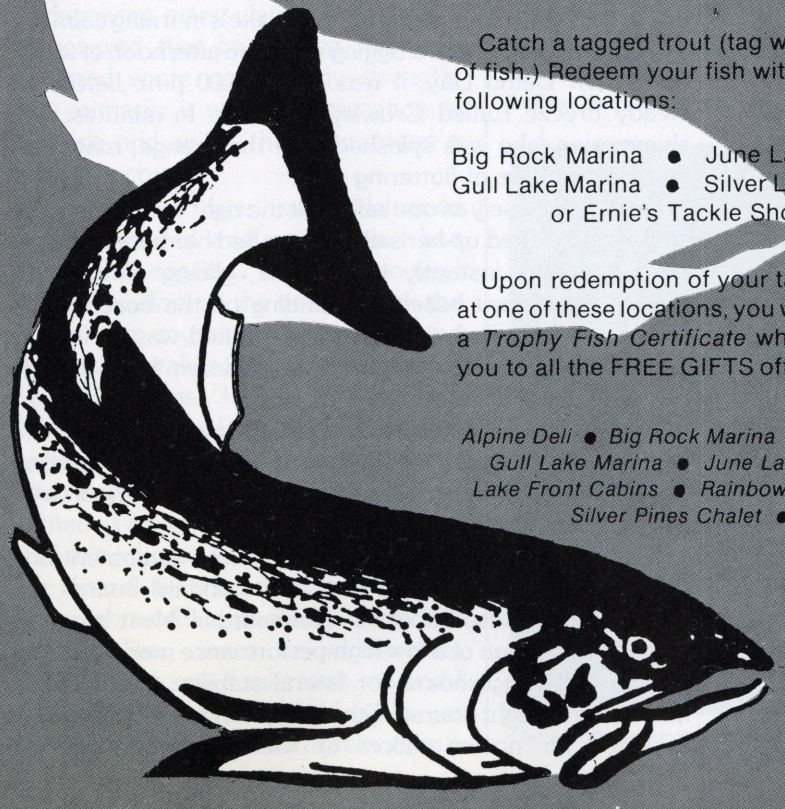

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SAILBOARDING SIERRA STYLE

by Meredith Nelson

Meredith Nelson photo

Sailboarding, a relatively new adventure sport, is the perfect summer complement to skiing. It's fast, it's wet, and it's exhilarating. Also known as "boardsailing" and "windsurfing," it fuses the skills of surfing and sailing and is one of the latest recreational pastimes to come to the Eastern Sierra Nevada. From Lake Tahoe to Lake Isabella, new places to sailboard are being discovered every year.

"If you like skiing, you'll love sailboarding," said veteran Mammoth ski patrolman Oriole Sole Costa, trying to get me to learn. "When the wind is strong and the sail full, you can go fast enough that the first two-thirds of your board will rise up out of the water. A searing noise, so loud it's scary, fills your ears and you get an awesome feeling of power—the power of nature, and of being in touch with it."

I was introduced to sailboarding recently at a "Demo Day" on Crowley Lake sponsored by the Associated Sierra Sailor's Club. Representatives from sailboard manufacturers Bic, HiFly America, Mistral and F2 had come to show their latest wares, which covered the beach at Beaver Cove. For $4.00 anyone from novice to pro could try any or all of the boards and take an optional lesson in basic sailboarding technique.

A civilized sport, sailboarding doesn't begin until the winds pick up, normally in the afternoon. This makes it easy to combine with other interests: spring skiing, scrambling up a rock face, water skiing across a lake's morning calm or simply sleeping in before rigging up for an afternoon of wind thrills. On Demo Day, it was nearly 1:00 p.m. before a steady breeze ruffled Crowley's surface. In minutes the shimmering lake was splashed with the orange, magenta and electric blue of fluttering sails.

I watched closely as one sailor felt the right wind currents, smiled and picked up her sail. She pushed her board off the sand and was instantly waterborne, gliding effortlessly toward the distant beaches. Standing on the beach I felt trapped, landlocked; suddenly all I wanted was to follow her. But I'd heard how difficult it was to learn. I decided I'd better take a lesson.

I was fortunate to meet Glenn Miyata, owner of the Free Sail shop in Mammoth. He agreed to give me a lesson preceded by an introduction to some of the important features of sailboards.

Glenn explained that the available demo equipment on the beach ranged from 12-foot long standard boards to shorter models also known as "funboards." Most boards, with the exception of a few high performance models, have a skeg and daggerboard for lateral stability and to help maintain a straight course. Generally, the longer boards are designed for novice sailors or use in low-knot winds

whereas the funboards are less stable, but easier to maneuver and more responsive to advanced sailing in heavy water and high winds. He showed me how the mast attaches in such a way that it can be guided to swivel in any direction, and can even be shifted forward or back on some models. The boom on a sailboard, unlike the straight model used on boats, is oval in shape and easy to grip. Also, it completely encircles the sail, allowing the sailor to steer from either side. The cut of the sail varies from a basic triangle to a highly sophisticated modification known as a "wind-cut" for maximum speed and performance. And no matter how colorful a sail is, it always has a clear plastic window so that a sailor can see in all directions.

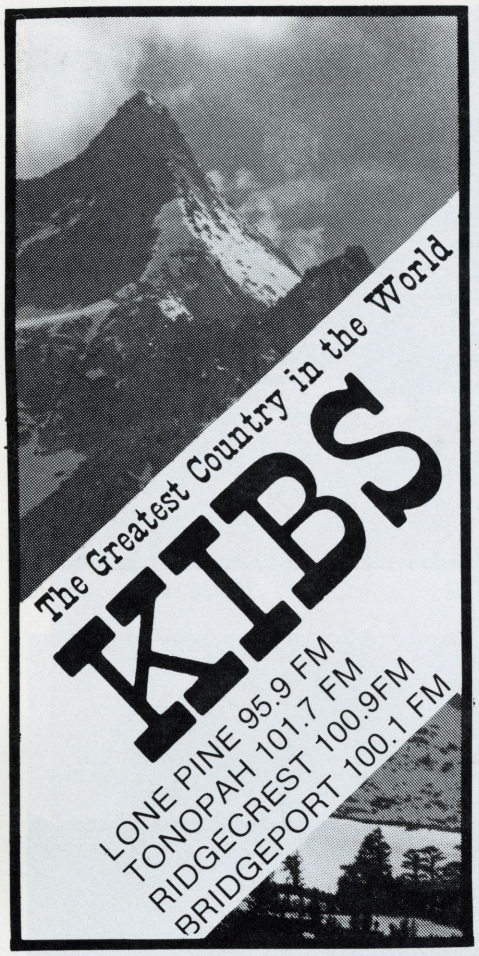
Once I understood something of how sailboards are put together, Glenn encouraged me to hop on one of his. Still apprehensive, I stepped up and began to haul the sail out of the water. This was the trickiest part, not so much because of the sail's weight, but because one minute I was pulling and leaning as hard as I could to get it out of the water, and the next, after the sail sprung clear and there was nothing left to pull against, I would topple backwards off the board. After I learned how to balance, though, I was able to play around with the four simple techniques that Glenn had taught me—all involving manipulation of the sail. I discovered that harnessing the wind required some upper body strength, but primarily it was a combination of balance and agility that guaranteed a straight course.

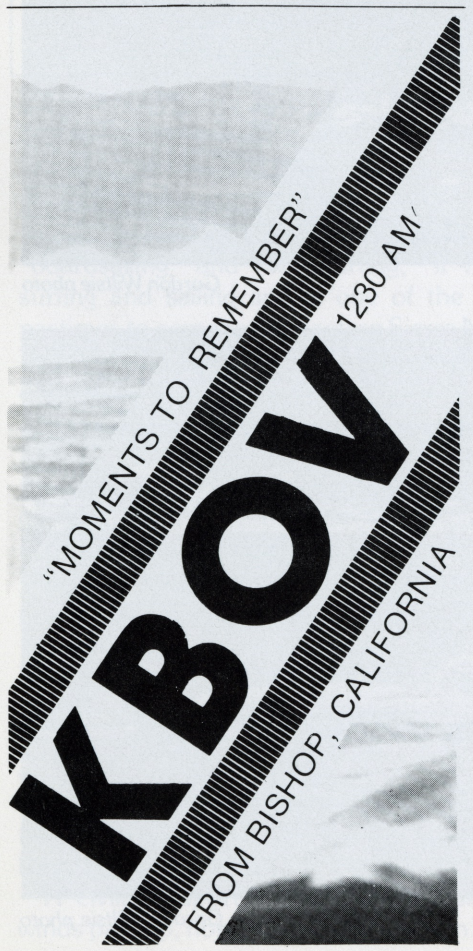
After about three hours, I felt tired but invigorated and as though I had made real progress. This is not to say I didn't bellyflop off the board, dunk the sail or trip myself trying to right the mast, all mistakes ingloriously known in sailing lingo as "hacking'." I hacked, many times. But with Glenn's softspoken coaching from the beach and patient handling of a guy line tethering me to shore lest I lose control, it didn't take long before I could orient the board, fill the sail with wind and skim, somewhat gracefully, over the lake. A few times an exhilarating sensation of speed overtook me and I realized how easy it would be to get hooked on sail-powered acceleration.

A beginner takes a lesson at June Lake on Demo Day. *Meredith Nelson photo*

Sailboarders race across Crowley Lake. *Gordon Wiltsie photo*

The author perfects her technique. *Gordon Wiltsie photo*





Just as I was pulling the board onto the sand for the last time, a fellow on the beach encouraged me, "Everyone remembers their first day, and how many times they fell. That's why you don't see anyone laughing. But the biggest mistake you can make is not to come back for a second try. *That's* when it starts to be fun."

Fun and a feeling of speed are only a few of the reasons people sailboard. Susan Meade, owner of Sierra Wave Sail adventures, June Lake's sailboarding outfit, says one of the things that attacts her to sailboarding is its individual freedom as compared to her other great love, big boat sailing, a sport built on team work and camaraderie. "I'm the kind of person who can't just go to the beach and sit around sunbathing. In sailboarding you can push yourself as hard as you want, or relax and sail casually."

Alan Trimble, an experienced sportsman and ex-coach for the U.S. Ski team, now Western Operations Manager for HiFly America, says he got involved because "sailboarding is exhilarating, it's a thrill somewhat like skiing. Every time I go out, it's an enlightening experience, something I go home and tell my friends about."

We're lucky, here in the Eastern Sierra, to have several excellent lakes for sailboarding. Among the favorites are sprawling Crowley Lake, swept by sometimes strong, always changing winds crossing Long Valley's expanse, and more intimate June Lake with crystalline waters and winds that are less eccentric in that they always come from the same direction. Even Klondike Reservoir, south of Bishop, is a popular spot for dedicated sailboarders who take to the water as early as late February, long before the other lakes open for the season.

Despite the opportunities for good sailboarding in the Eastern Sierra, and the fact that the sport has been around for nearly fourteen years, it was introduced here only five years ago. Local pioneers included Mammoth skiers Tom Cherry and Gordy Johnson who wanted a challenging and athletic sport to fill their summers. In 1982 Glenn Miyata and Susan Meade began their respective businesses, and have been working ever since to promote the sport locally. Susan sees Eastern Sierra sailboarding as an excellent complement for people who normally come to backpack, climb or hang glide, or as an exciting alternative for family members of fishermen and hunters.

The A.S.S. Beach Club, a non-competitive group of local sailing enthusiasts, sponsors a number of fun events each season. Organized by Karen Buzon of Crowley Lake, these get-togethers are an excellent way to get involved with the sport since you don't have to own a sailboard to participate. It's not necessary to be a club member to attend any of these gatherings, but there is a $6.00 charge per event. A better deal is to join the informal club for the season ($17.00) and enjoy open admission to all the events. The fee also includes four barbeques, a club visor and membership card good for discounts at local businesses. 1985 season events include, among others, Demo Weekend (Saturday at Crowley, Sunday at June), a kite fly-in/barbeque and beach party, a race to Sandy Point and back followed by a barbeque, and perhaps most notably the 3rd annual Crowley Lake Crossing sponsored by Free Sail of Mammoth. This is a two day endurance race followed by an awards ceremony and midsummer feast at Convict Lake Resort.

But if you're visiting the Eastern Sierra and your schedule doesn't happen to include any of the A.S.S. Club event days, you can still try out the sport either by renting equipment or, better yet, taking an intoductory lesson to get you started.

For sailing on Crowley, call Glenn Miyata and he'll arrange to meet you at Beaver Cove, the sailboarders' beach on the Lake. The season opens Memorial Day weekend and continues until about Labor Day, though later in the summer lake algae can be a problem. On a weekend afternoon you're almost guaranteed to find at least a few people on the beach rigging their sails, a tape player serenading the wind gods and a few old timers fishing off the beach. As the afternoon progresses, hot sun and mountain slopes produce spiraling heat thermals which, if you're lucky, translate into steady breezes that sweep the

glistening high altitude desert lake until dusk.

For a different sailing experience, try June Lake, sparkling amidst snow tendrilled peaks, Jeffrey Pine forests, and granite outcroppings. June has a cozier feel than Crowley. The mountains are closer and a gentle sand beach offers easy takeoffs and landings. But June opens later (whenever the ice thaws) and the lake remains colder all summer because of its higher elevation—definite wet suit territory. Susan Meade is the one to contact for rentals or lessons here or on adjacent Grant Lake.

If all this sounds tempting and you want to plunge in, you can set yourself up with new equipment for between $700 and $1,800, which you can purchase from either Free Sail of Mammoth or Sierra Wave Adventures of June Lake. Fortunately, though, with such a price tag, you don't have to buy your own to begin sailboarding. You can borrow from friends (believe it or not there are approximately 200-400 active local sailboarders), experiment at Demo Weekends or rent until you're so devoted you find yourself scrimping to buy your own.

If you really enjoy the sport, buying equipment may be a worthwhile investment. While the average sailboarder tends to be 30-35 years old, overall they range in age from pre-teens to a famous Pennsylvania couple still windsailing in their seventies. As long as you're fit and seek the thrill of pushing your limits a little or even if you just enjoy the blustery summer beauty of our local lakes, sailboarding is a sport to last you many years.

The best part about sailboarding for Eastern Sierra residents and visitors is that it's much less expensive than boating and a lot more accessible than driving miles to the ocean for surfing or sailing. It is a non-polluting, self-propelled sport and almost a customized complement to skiing.

Considering that the Eastern Sierra is already regarded nationwide as somewhat of an adventure center for mountaineering, hang gliding and mountain biking—a sort of secret Aspen, Colorado—sailboarding can only contribute to its reputation as a base for a multitude of adventure sports. □

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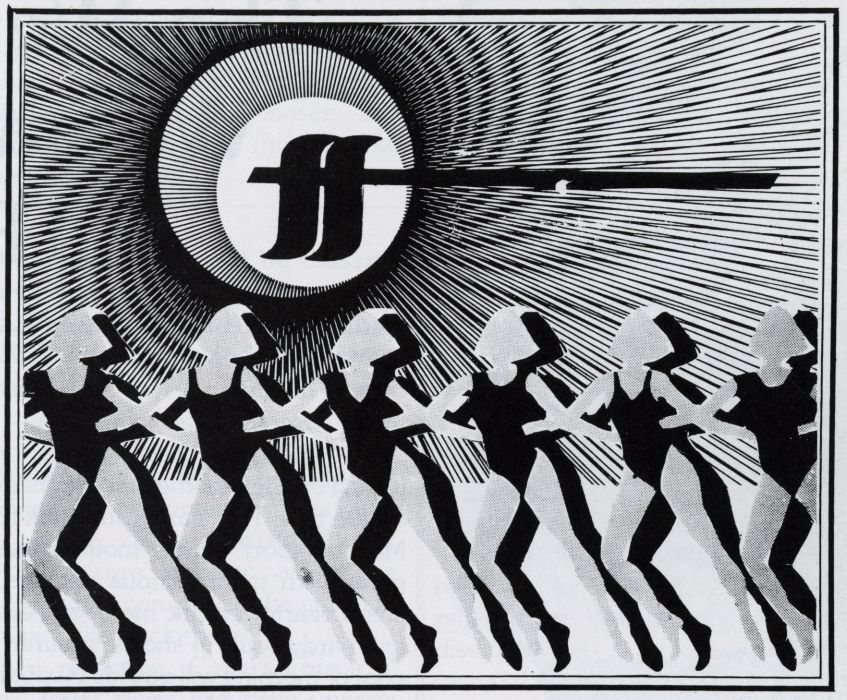

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The Well Dressed Woman on the TRAIL

Gloria Swanson models an "outing suit" in 1919.

Photos courtesy of Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter

A backcountry outfit, circa 1920.

by Martha Voght

The first rays of sun touch a Sierra peak; below in the meadow backpackers stir, pulling on their clothes for another day on the trail. There are jeans, tank tops, Madras sport shirts, mountaineering pants with multitudinous pockets, T-shirts bearing cryptic messages, even a few hardy souls in shorts, assured the cool of morning will quickly dissipate in the high altitude glare. We notice oddities in costume: the Englishman wearing a tie, a woman in shorts and leg warmers, and a couple in poly long johns and running shorts. What we do not consciously notice is that men and women are wearing the same things; long before fashion designers discovered unisex clothing, backpackers arrived at that practical conclusion.

Eighty years ago things were quite different. In an era when men and boys gathered at trolley stops to catch a flash of sensuous ankle, what women were to wear on the trail was a topic of some moment. How could a female keep her modesty and yet travel securely in the mountains, assured a long skirt would not send her accidently tumbling into some abyss?

The female clothing problem began in 1841, when the first white woman, Nancy Kelsey, crossed the Sierra Nevada. There is no record of what she wore, but since she survived, we can be sure it was not the outdoor costume of the Eastern lady of fashion, which comprised a corset tightly laced to compress her midriff, camisole, drawers down to the ankles, and five petticoats, covered by a dress (the bodice so tight she could not raise her arms), bonnet, and shawl. Perhaps Mrs. Kelsey switched to men's clothing, a not unusual response to the frontier West. Calamity Jane acquired a portion of her unsavory reputation by dressing in trousers, an act in that day as sensational as a modern, non-Scots male appearing on the street in a skirt.

Mountain-bound women got a new choice in the 1850s when Amelia Bloomer popularized the outfit named for her; approximately fifteen pounds of petticoats and skirt were replaced by trousers worn under a skirt reaching slightly below the knee. Women crossing the continent to Oregon and California found it much more practical than long skirts, which caught every trailside bush, dragged in the spring mud of the plains, and swept up the autumn dust of the Great Basin. The bloomer's disadvantage: it excited considerable ridicule from young boys and righteous condemnation from pulpits.

Regardless, the bloomer hung on among active women and remained the model for female mountaineering garb for over fifty years.

In 1901 a man was accidently made fashion arbiter for women in the mountains. William E. Colby organized the first Sierra Club outing in the Sierra Nevada, and as leader had to advise participants on proper dress. His outing bulletins unwittingly chronicle a revolution in women's dress.

According to Colby, women should have two long-sleeved blouses, a sturdy one for tramping through the high country and a lighter one for wearing around camp. Knee high boots were to be met by dark-colored bloomers (meaning full pants), possibly so no pink kneecap would arouse lustful thoughts, but more probably to protect vulnerable flesh in a pre-mosquito repellant world. Over the bloomers

Madame Hiker was to wear a skirt "not more than halfway from knee to ankle," or, if she planned to ride a horse part of the time, a divided skirt. "It would be unsafe to ride otherwise than astride portions of the trip and side saddles will be provided."

Every man and woman needed a broad brimmed hat. Women added a heavy veil to protect their faces from unladylike sunburn. PABA was far in the future! Since women at the turn of the century piled their long hair atop their heads, the large hats were secured by hat pins thrust through the crown and the mass of hair.

(A hat pin, for those born after 1930, was a stiletto several inches long, with a decorative head. It could be used not only to secure a hat, but as a powerful dissuader to thugs, muggers, and unwanted suitors. Today it would be classed with switchblades and zip guns and carrying one would probably require a concealed weapons permit.)

After reaching camp, women might replace the tall boots with low shoes, but in that case they also donned leggings, tubes of stout cotton or light canvas extending from knee to shoe top, somewhat akin to the lower leg equipment seen on statues of soldiers in World War I memorials. An alternative was puttees, a strip of cloth wound around the lower leg, which had a disturbing tendency to loosen and unwind, settling around the foot like some friendly snake.

"A hat pin. . . would be classed with switchblades and zip guns and carrying one would probably require a concealed weapons permit."

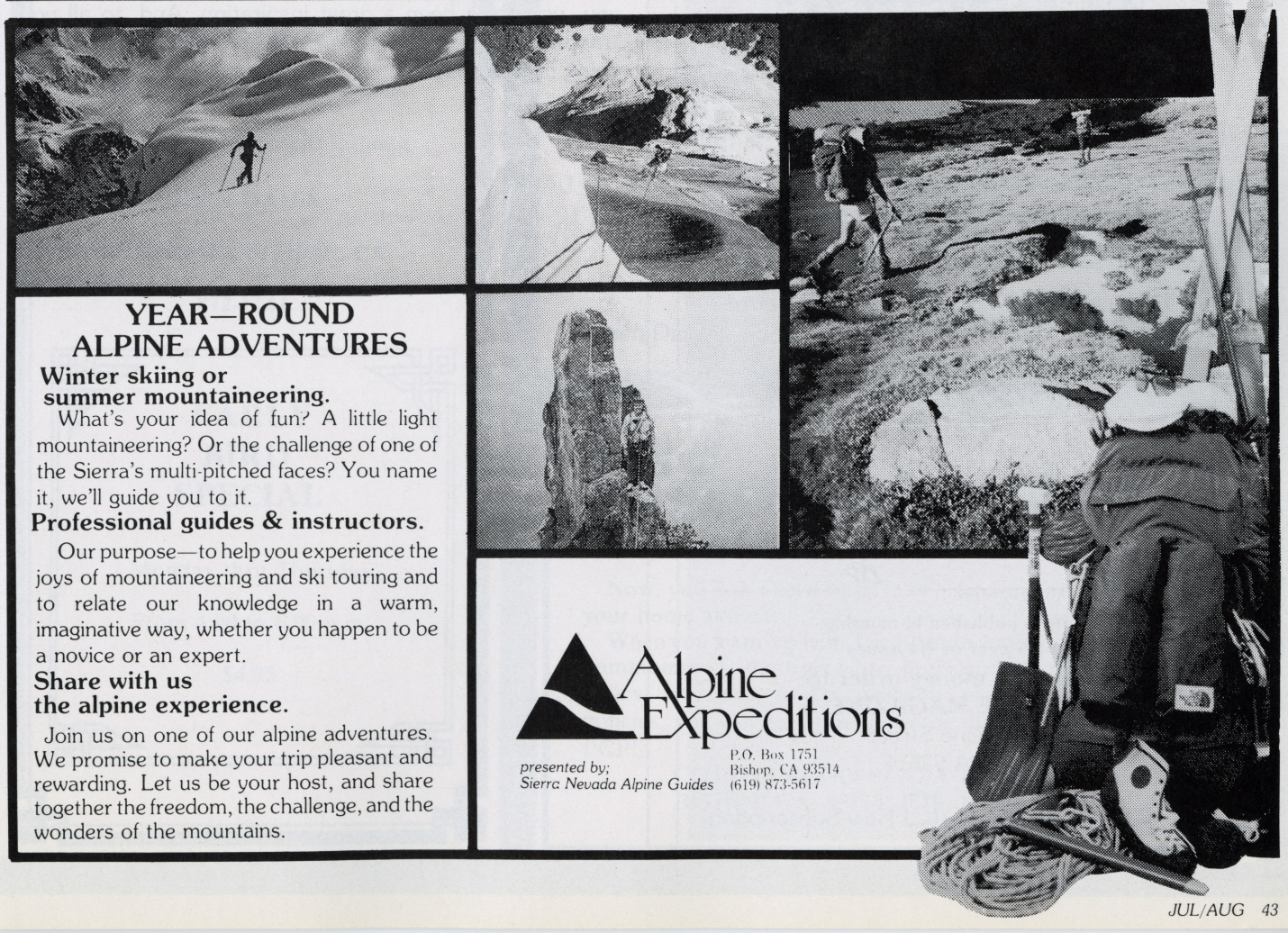
Obviously, in 1901 no woman traveled light. Fortunately, mules toted the luggage. More fortunately for women's leisure in camp, a Chinese laundryman accompanied the group to wash this pile of clothes.

Upon reflection, Colby's choice of words about skirts had been unwise. When he wrote "no more than halfway from knee to ankle," did he mean 1) no shorter than halfway to the knee to mitigate male palpitations, or 2) no longer than halfway to the ankle so the wearer would not step on her hem on steep trails? He clarified the matter in 1903 by advising skirts "not many inches below the knee."

For years this was the accepted mode of dress for women in the Sierra. They hiked the trails of Tuolumne Meadows in long-sleeved blouses, climbed Mount Whitney in skirts, and ascended the glaciers of Mount Lyell shadowed by thick veils. If there were any complaints over this hot, confining costume they are not recorded. But there are hints of problems caused directly by women's fashions.

First came the thundering directive, THERE SHALL BE NO HAT PINS IN DUNNAGE BAGS! What happened the previous year to bring this on? There is not one whisper in the trip report, but the mind whirls with possibilities. Was an innocent packer disemboweled as he tossed duffle off at camp? Did a mule fly down the Kern

continued on page 58



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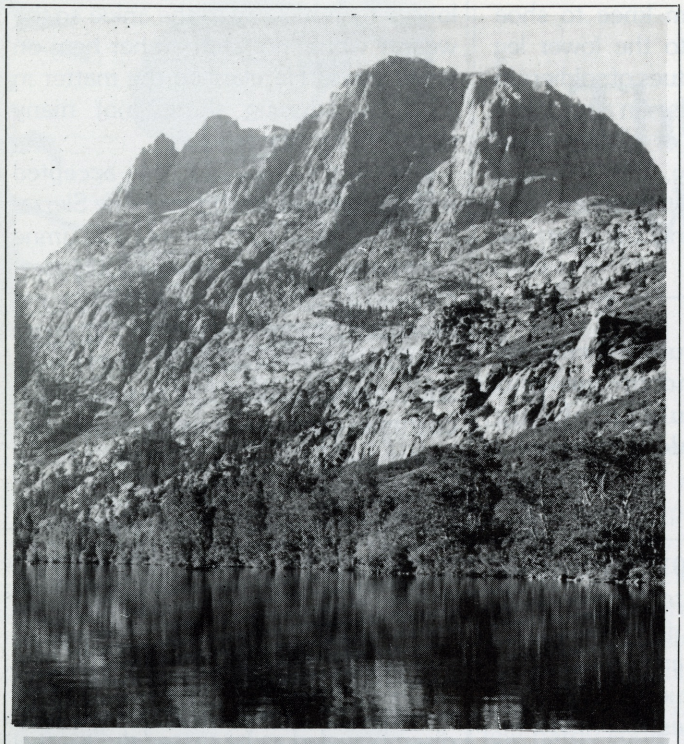

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From the Publisher

I admire mountain climbers. I think I know what it's like to hang from your fingertips on the face of a sheer granite peak.

Five years ago this November, we published our first issue of Sierra Life. Each day has been like climbing a mountain—the closer we get to the top, the more beautiful the view becomes.

There have been times when we felt someone pulling at our feet as we made our way upward. They were the people who said, "Give up, you'll never make it." We didn't look down, we just held on a little tighter. When things got really tough, we could look to the summit for inspiration and would find a hand reaching down to help. These were the people who had already made the climb. They knew that if we were determined enough, we could make it too.

Determination is the key. Without it, your dreams won't come true. To all of those people who say, "Give up, you'll never make it," I say: Find yourself a dream and be determined to make it real. You won't have time to pull anyone else down. To those of you on the summit, thank you, you have been a great inspiration. And, to all you "mountain climbers" out there—keep on climbing, we're all going to make it.

Sandie Pramann
Publisher

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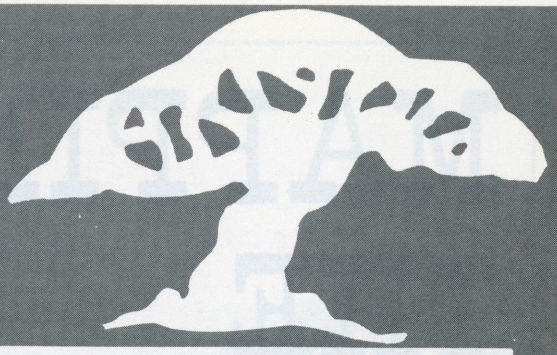

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MAPPING THE EASTERN SIERRA: 1845

By Martha Voght

John Charles Fremont

The hot sun of summer beat down upon the plains as John Charles Fremont and sixty rough looking men moved out of Bent's Fort on August 16, 1845. Despite the heat there were hints of autumn in the air. The sun's daily sky-trail had moved southward. The grass had long since gone to seed and crackled dryly beneath the horses' hooves. Within a month the first storms of winter slid from the north, engulfing them in cold rain or blowing snow. The expedition had to cross two mountain ranges and the great desert lying between them before reaching their goal—California.

Captain Fremont had tarried at Bent's Fort for good reason. Heading west to explore unmapped territory for the government, he needed experienced companions. He had sent a message to Kit Carson at his ranch near Taos, New Mexico, asking him to join the expedition. After several weeks of waiting, Carson appeared, always ready to abandon the settled occupation of farmer for the excitement of a new trail. With him came his partner, Richard Owens. Although Carson was the better known of the two, Owens was equally as skilled in wilderness travel, and was noted particularly for possessing an unflappable personality in the face of crisis.

Moving across the rolling plains with 200 pack animals and about 400 head of loose stock, the expedition looked more like a cattle drive than a scientific endeavor. By the time they reached the summit pass of the Rockies and were descending the western slopes, the herd was more manageable for every day steers were slaughtered for food, and every morning there were two or three fewer wild-eyed, long-horned creatures to keep moving.

Shortly after the first of October the expedition surmounted the last range of the Rockies, the Wasatch Mountains, and camped beside Utah Lake, where they celebrated by feasting on trout. Then on to the Great Salt Lake Valley and its as yet unsettled grass lands, where they rested their animals and themselves for two weeks, hunted antelope, and explored the environs of the inland sea.

Then west again, across the gleaming, deadly salt flats,

The expedition's first view of the Sierra, 1845.

then along the Humboldt River, carefully mapping the route which would, in four more years, be the highway of the Gold Rush. On November 28, from the mountain heights above Walker Lake, they glimpsed the mighty wall of the Sierra Nevada, the final barrier between themselves and California. Snow had already fallen on the peaks. The nights were freezing; Captain Fremont's carefully packed thermometers stood at only 4 degrees above zero one morning. The herd of cattle was almost gone and the men planned to live for a few days upon trout from Walker Lake, while the horses and mules rested and grazed.

Their hopes were dashed. The lake was barren of fish this late in the season. There was nothing to do but keep traveling on short rations, hoping to arrive in California before hunger forced them to slaughter and eat the horses they rode.

In the Rockies another famous mountain man had joined Fremont—Joseph R. Walker, the man for whom the lake they camped beside was named. For years he had wandered the west as a trapper and guide, and he had not only been to California, he had found a pass through the Sierra, far to the south.

Fremont, who never forgot why the government financed his travels, saw a way for the expedition to explore more ground, even though supplies were low. One section of the party, including himself, Carson, Owens, and a few other men, would go north to the Salmon Trout (Truckee) River, and find and map a pass in that region. The majority would head south, guided by Walker, to map and officially describe the Eastern Sierra and the pass to the south.

The two parties would meet in the great Central Valley of California, at Tulare Lake on the Lake Fork (Kings) River, the northern group picking up supplies at Sutter's Fort to succor the men following Walker.

The duties of journalist and topographer for the southern party were turned over to Edward Kern, a young artist who had been hired by Fremont to illustrate the flora, fauna, and landforms seen by the expedition, and draw maps of their itinerary. Kern's journal was to furnish the first written account of the Eastern Sierra south of the Walker River.

There was no game around the lake; even the Indians seemed to be starving. So Walker led his men south, hoping to find grass and food in a warmer locale. As if eating stringy horseflesh wasn't bad enough, the water holes they found held only brackish water. To make the coffee more palatable one morning, the cook tried tossing in a few twigs of some desert plant. He succeeded only in spoiling it completely. The men would not drink the brew at all, quite remarkable considering these hungry travelers might be willing to eat their own boot soles with enough salt and pepper.

A few days later some roots were

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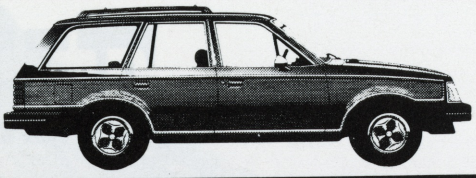
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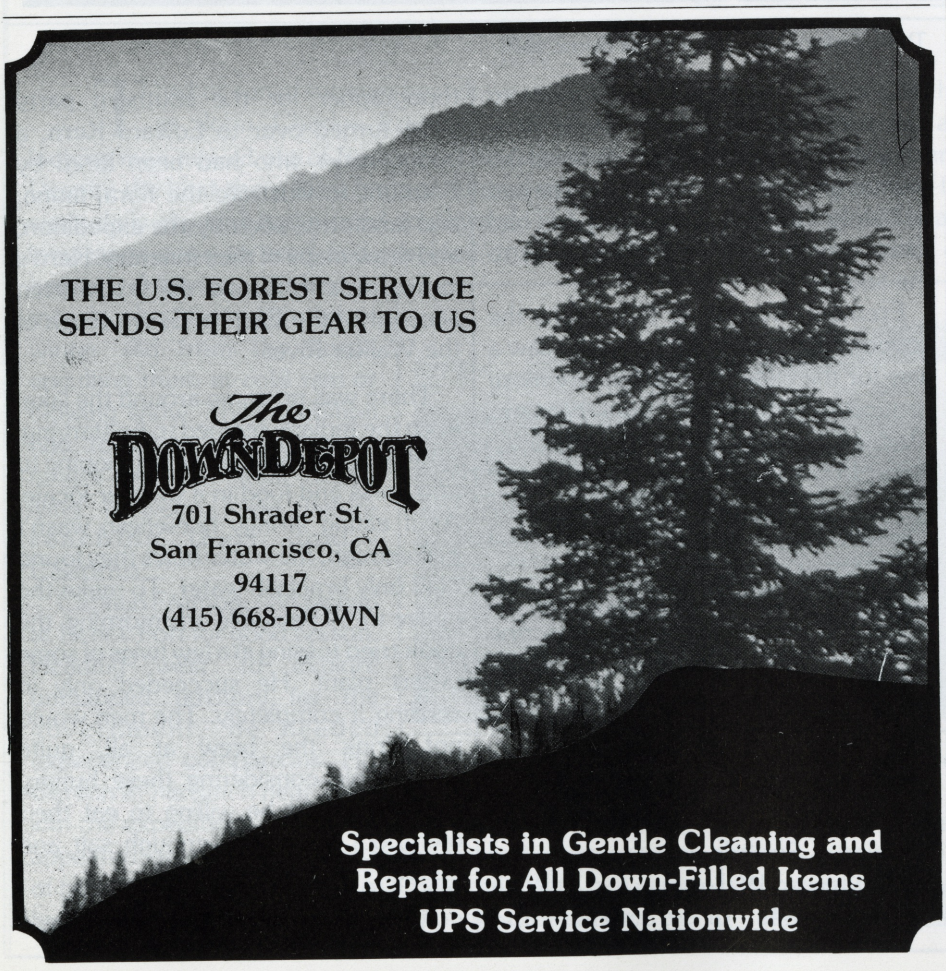
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found near an Indian hut. They were cooked as a side dish to the boiled horse, and proved flavorful, but this time the cook accidentally dropped a piece of soap in the coffee, spoiling what might have been a palatable, if not gourmet dinner. In his journal that evening, Ned Kern recorded this disaster, along with his description of the country. Considering the state of their supplies, wasting coffee ranked as a major catastrophe.

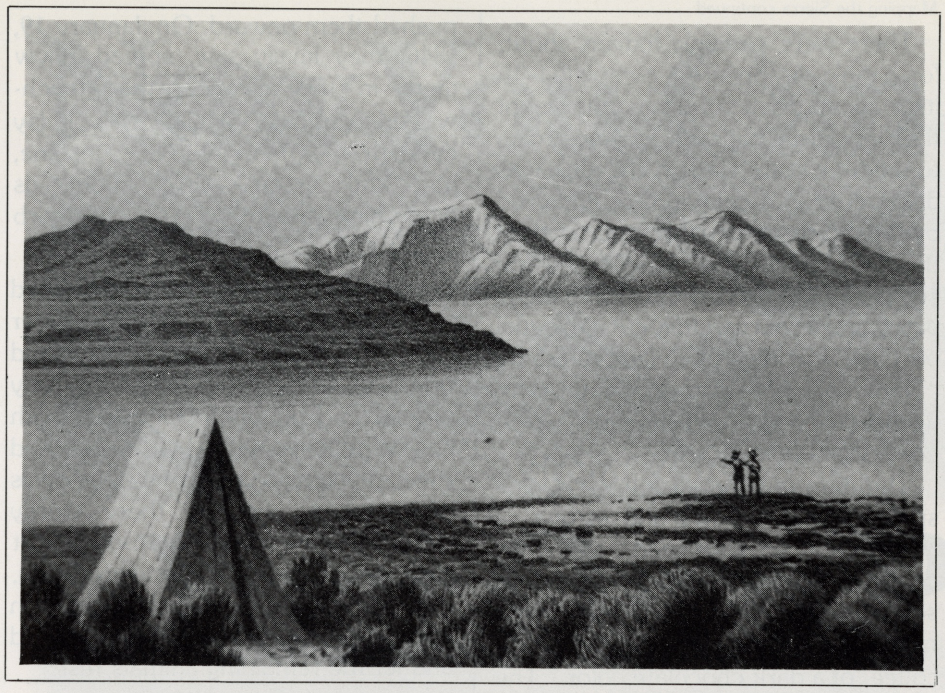
The horses were growing weaker every day without adequate food, so the men were forced to walk. This made them even hungrier. After eight days of travel southward, they struck a large river flowing through a valley at the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada. Eyeing the marshy lowlands, they discovered ducks and geese in abundance.

The fresh meat was welcome, but they had run out of salt. Walker searched out a small playa, where salt was "incrusted to the thickness of a quarter of an inch on the surface of the earth." With their supply renewed, the men could look forward with more equanimity to a diet of horse, sometimes interrupted by roast duck.

Walker warned them to be cautious of the Indians in this valley, for ten years before, when he had last traveled this way, they had not been friendly. But in this chilly December of 1845 the Indians kept out of sight. Perhaps they had no inclination to share their pine nuts and taboose with over forty hungry white men who carried rifles.

Hunger did not stop Kern from recording observations about the country. He noted the river created an almost continuous fertile "bottom" for over fifty miles; wherever streams flowed from the mountains there were extensive marshes full of wildlife; the streams were lined with willow and cottonwood, leafless now, and chattering in the wind. There was evidence of broad, lush pastures, but the frost had leveled the grass and left little for the horses.

Southward they plodded, as fast as they and their weakened animals could go. They passed a great, saline lake, fifteen miles long, at the end of the valley, then found their progress slowed even more as the soil turned to loose sand. Each step became a struggle.

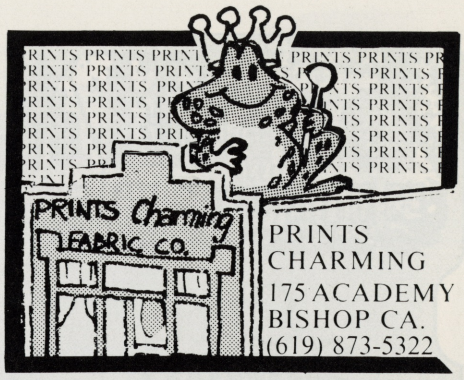


The west end of Fremont's Island in the Great Salt Lake.

High above were thin stands of cottonwoods along the streams, and higher still, unbroken rock walls topped with snow, cutting them off from the warmth, game, and grass of the Central Valley. They had no instruments to measure their elevation or the height of the mountains above, so they did not realize they were gazing upon the highest peak in the central portion of the North American continent, within five years to be the highest point in the United States.

Shortly before Christmas they found new grass responding to the first rains of winter; they also discovered trees of "grotesque appearance, a straight trunk, guarded about its base by long bayonet-shaped leaves." Ned Kern nicknamed them 'Jeremiah' for their gnarled, aged appearance, coming very close, in the spirit of the prophets and the patriarchs, to their eventual name, Joshua. Soon they passed a location where a number of Indian trails came together, and were heartened by the thought that this indicated a pass over the mountains must be nearby.

Colonel Fremont enters Monterey.



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There were certainly Indians about, for a mule disappeared, complete with its precious pack containing the last of their sugar and coffee. It took no urging to mount a search party. The mule was discovered in a canyon, accompanied by three Indians who fled at the sight of the white men. The posse found the sugar already divided into three equal parts, and a coat carefully cut into equal portions, but the coffee lay discarded. "They had charred and pounded it, without coming to any satisfactory conclusion as to its use."

The men regathered the pack, plus spoils of war—"bows and arrows, a large sack of sage-seed, about as digestible as sand, and a small sack of some compound, which we could not make out; it was very palatable with coffee, of a dark chocolate color." The hearty mountain men would have been astonished, and possibly nauseated, to learn they were relishing a mixture of roasted grasshoppers and crickets, pounded and mixed with animal fat.

Christmas Day was spent near some wells of good water, fires of "Jeremiah" wood were kept burning, and to celebrate, a worn out mule was slaughtered instead of a horse. The men became nostalgic, recalling memories of more comfortable Christmases back home, but at least they could be thankful it was warm and clear, they were near the pass Walker had promised, and no one was ill from the hardships through which they had passed.

Two days after this "unchristmas-like" holiday they had climbed into the Sierra behind Walker and reached the headwater of a river flowing into the Central Valley. They were glad to be heading over the mountains instead of yet farther south, for from the heights all they could see in that direction was "a plain of sand, relieved only by an occasional hill of burnt rock rearing itself above the level, adding, if possible, to the desolation of the scene, with no game, save now and then a hare, and perchance a stray goat (bighorn sheep)."

Walker mistook the river they were following for the "Lake Fork," where they were to meet Fremont. Reaching a fork in the river, he supposed it was the rendezvous point, and they camped for two weeks until the shortage of food pushed them onward. On January 19, 1846, they finally saw, spread below them in the distance, the "much-wished-for Valley of California. It lay beneath (them), bright in the sunshine, gay and green, while about us everything was clothed in the chilly garb of winter."

In the meantime, Fremont had visited Sutter's Fort, but found the master away, and the second-in-command unwilling to sell the Americans any provisions. Fremont headed south with limited supplies and when he reached the meeting place found no trace of his men. Finally, figuring these sturdy men could take care of themselves, just as he and his companions were doing, he rode north to the Spanish setlements, where he could obtain food and let the remaining animals rest.

Fremont was right in his opinion of Walker, Kern, and their companions. They found game in the Central Valley, first a fat horse, and then two grizzly bears. After the first bear was killed there was quite a celebration, for the fat meat "enlivened the spirits of the men, and mirth abounded at the various campfires that night; the song and joke, the accompaniments of plenty in the wilderness, could be heard everywhere."

When Fremont finally heard news of Walker's party, he sent fresh horses from San Jose, where he was camped. On February 15, 1846, the expedition was reunited, and Ned Kern turned over to the Captain his notes, journals, and rough maps. These were integrated into Fremont's final report to Congress on the expedition, and exercising the power he had as captain of an exploring team, he named the landmarks identified by Kern. The river where they had found the ducks and geese, the valley through which it flowed, and the saline lake where it ended were given the name Owens, after the faithful mountain man Richard Owens. The pass which Kern mapped as he followed Joe Walker was called Walker Pass on the map Fremont sent along with his report. And the final river which the party had followed out of the cold heights of the Sierra Fremont named Kern, after the young man who had suffered hunger and cold, without losing his sense of humor or talent for observation. □

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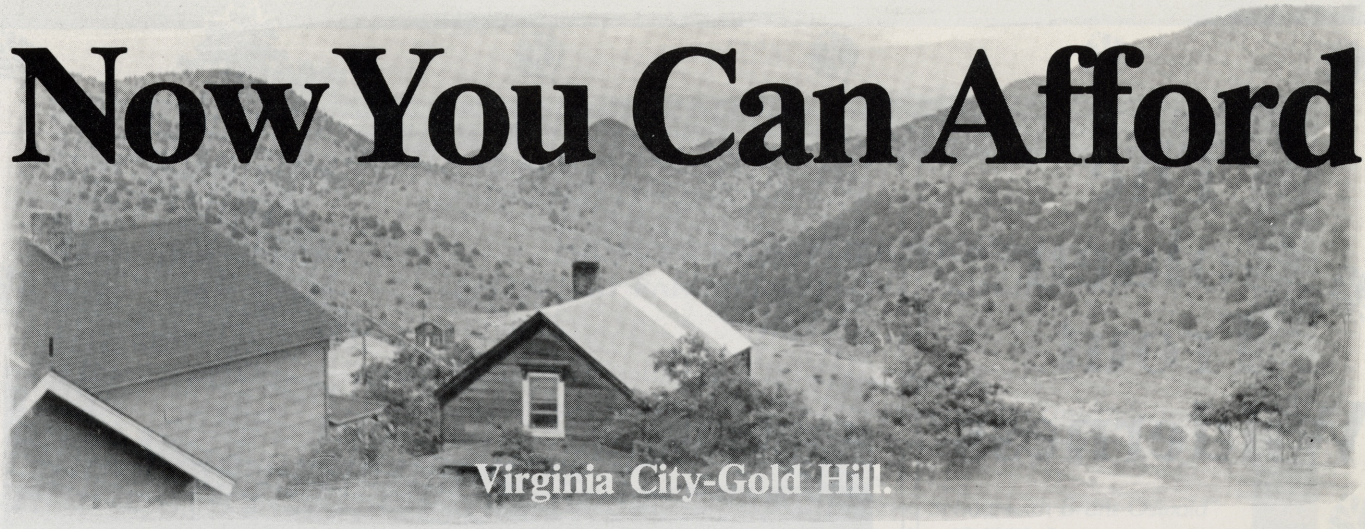

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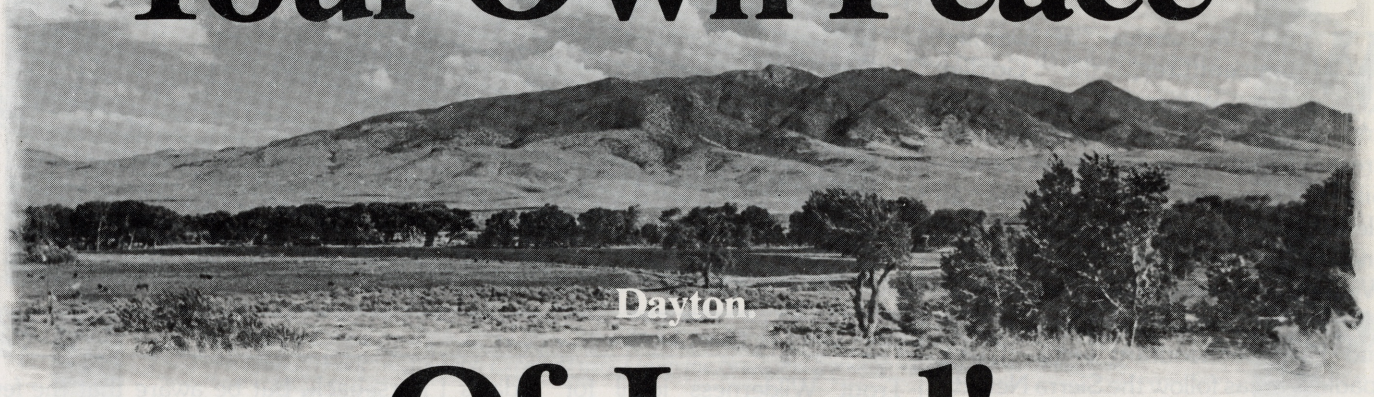

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The Golden Trout Wilderness

Text and Photo by Hank Levine

With the arrival of warmer temperatures, the Golden Trout Wilderness is usually the first of the Sierra Nevada wilderness areas to lose its annual snow cover. Situated on the Kern Plateau, at elevations ranging between 3,800 feet and 13,000 feet, the Golden Trout Wilderness is the southernmost unit in a series of continuous National Forest and Park backcountry areas. These roadless areas follow the Sierra Nevada crest for over 150 air miles.

The Kern Plateau is typified by many large, wet meadows separated by timbered ridges. Only on the eastern side of the wilderness does the gentle land give way to steep, rugged terrain. The area was named for California's state fish, whose native waters encompass most of the wilderness.

Native Americans first visited the Kern Plateau over 6,000 years ago, although not much is known of their stay. Sheep grazed the large meadows in the early 1880's, but were replaced by cattle within 5 years. By the late 1880's, over 10,000 cows summered on the plateau. It is interesting to note that there has been very little change in cattle operations over the last 100 years, because the area has never been accessible to motor vehicles. Stock has always served as transportation for the cowboy. On the Kern Plateau, cattle drives (using rustic cow camps dating back to the last century) are still an annual affair.

The gently rolling terrain and vast size (300,000 acres) make the Golden Trout Wilderness ideal for today's horseman. Not only can commercial pack stations be found at Tunnel Meadows and Cottonwood Canyon, but the area is perfect for equestrians who have their own stock and enjoy wilderness riding and camping. Besides having ideal terrain and well maintained trails, the Kern Plateau has many fenced pastures where stock can graze. Tho open meadows also provide excellent feed, but remember that the picketing of stock can quickly ruin an area.

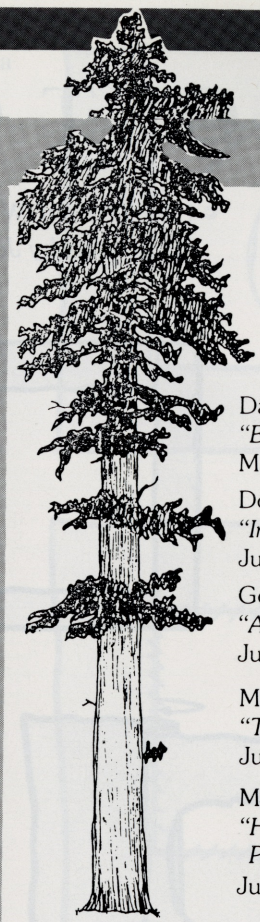
The area provides great hiking opportunities. For those who like to hike on trails, there are 27 trailheads for the Golden Trout Wilderness. So gentle is the terrain on the western side of the Sierra Crest, and so rugged is that of the east side, that there is only one trail that traverses the wilderness.

For those who enjoy hiking cross-country, the Golden Trout Wilderness is paradise. Easy hiking and route finding is the rule of the day.

Streams, rivers and meadows provide a vast amount of water for wilderness users, whether on foot or horseback, but be aware that the few lakes that do exist receive heavy use. Fishing for the area's two species of Golden trout is generally good. Check fishing regulations before entering the wilderness, since special laws have been implemented in an effort to help protect the Golden trout populations.

Wildlife is abundant there. Black bears, coyotes, deer, marmots, chipmunks, squirrels, mice and many other mammals can be found there as well as ravens, raptors (including the Golden eagle), and many species of songbirds. These animals are wild no matter how cute they may appear. For your safety, they should be admired from a distance only.

People are visitors in wilderness areas. To help retain the area's primeval characteristics, special regulations have been instituted, as well as quotas at some trailheads. To obtain a wilderness permit or for information on access and stock use, contact Mount Whitney Ranger District, Inyo National Forest, P.O. Box 8, Lone Pine, California 93545, or phone (619) 876-5542.



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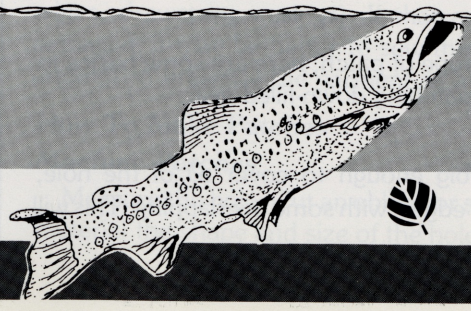


TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF *patching* DOWN GEAR

© 1984 THE DOWN DEPOT

illustrations by Jane Barton

Genie Dvorak, Senior Seamstress at the Down Depot, was a major contributor to the text and sewing concepts used in this article.

It happens to everyone. . . the dreaded, almost inevitable hole in one's precious down garment, comforter or sleeping bag. Once it happens, accept it—it's never going to look quite the same. Fortunately, a sturdy patch can preserve the function of the item and keep it looking good despite the injury. "There's really no mystery to it," declares Genie, senior seamstress at The Down Depot of San Francisco. "All it takes is a little know-how and a lot of patience." Genie has put together the following helpful hints on patch repair. . . the patience is up to you!

Types of Patches

There are three basic types of patches

1. Machine Patch (see Figures 1a-1d)
2. Hand Patch—Outside (see Figures 2a-2b)
3. Hand Patch—Inside (see Figures 3a-3b)

The machine patch is perhaps the most durable, but, if done correctly, all three types of patches are very strong. The main difference is in esthetics and ease of application (which depends on where the patch is needed.) The hand patch done from the inside is the least noticeable if the patch material is closely matched to the material of the item you are patching. Hard to reach areas (inside pocket, on a seam, near a zipper) require a hand patch. It would be too difficult to get at these areas with a machine. Holes with more space around them (on a sleeping bag, the back of a jacket) do well with a machine patch.

Basics

Regardless of the type of patch, here are some basics to keep in mind when patching down-filled gear:

Frayed Material

Make the patch big enough to cover all of the hole, including any frayed edges, with some overlapping. This will increase durability.

FIGURE 1a

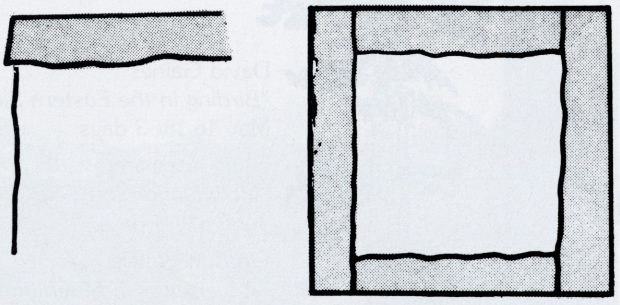


FIGURE 1b

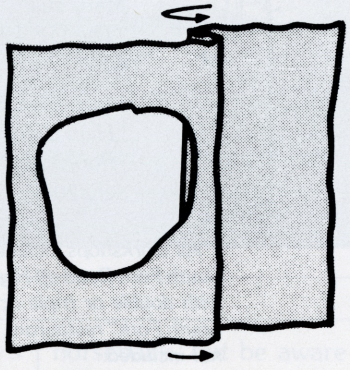


FIGURE 1c

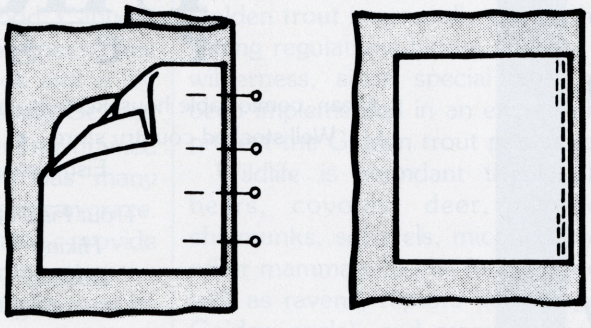


FIGURE 1d

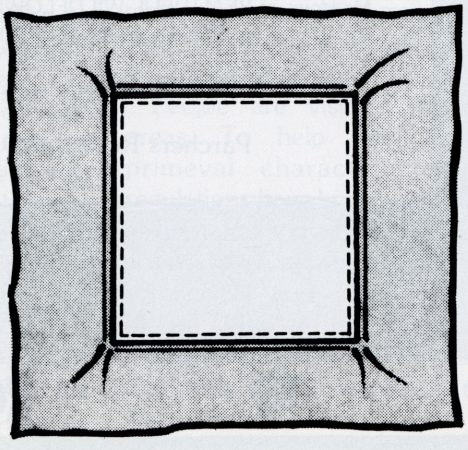


FIGURE 2a

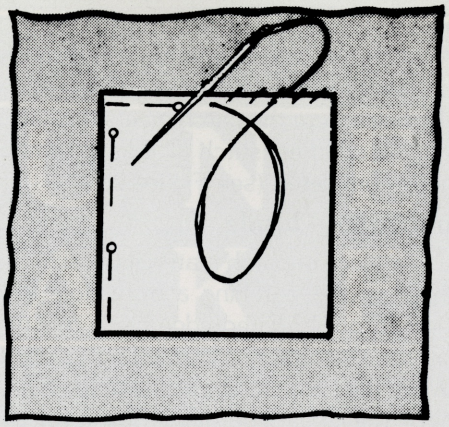


FIGURE 2b

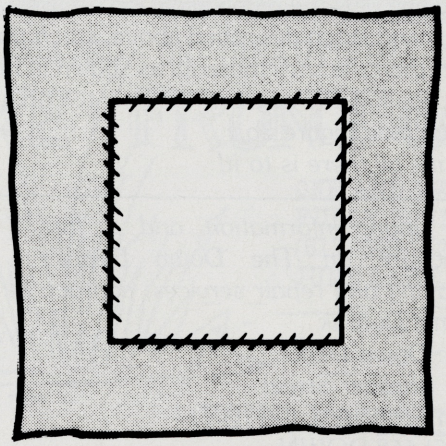


FIGURE 3a

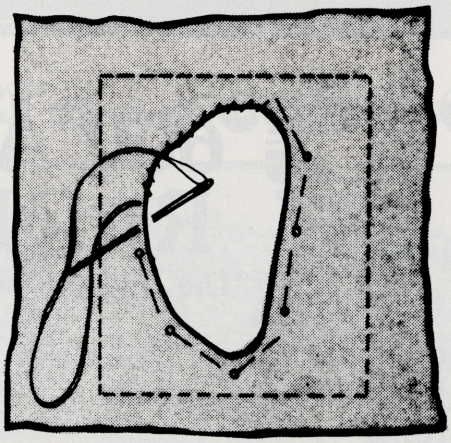
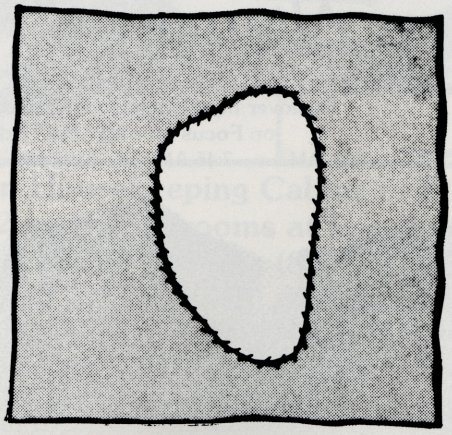


FIGURE 3b



Type of Patch Material

A patch is most effective when it is made of the same kind of material as the item you are patching. Use nylon on nylon, cotton on cotton, etc. Consider also the weight of the materials—a very heavy cotton patch on a thin comforter shell would soon tear out because of the unequal stress of the two materials.

Pin It Down

A patch has a tendency to slip as it's being sewn, which can result in unwanted gathers and a shortage of patch material where it's needed. You'll save time and a lot of frustration if you take a few extra seconds to pin it securely before sewing.

Threads and Needles

A small needle works best for hand sewing. Use a relatively short double thread. Down from under the patch tends to catch each time you take a stitch, causing the thread to knot and tangle. A short thread makes this easier to control. Be sure to secure thread ends by knotting them.

The size of machine needle is determined by the weight of fabric you're sewing. Most needle packets give self-explanatory descriptions of each needle size (for example, lightweight knits, broadcloth, heavy poplin, etc.) Consult these instructions for your decision on needle size.

Stitch Size

For hand patches, place stitches about 1/16 to 1/8 inch apart. If the patched area sustains a lot of wear and tear, place them very close together and pick up a substantial amount of material. If the item you're patching needs to stretch a bit, allow more room between stitches and take up less material.

For machine patches, a stitch width of 8-10 stitches per inch generally works well. Again, vary this depending on how much "give" is needed.

What's Under There?

The construction of down garments and equipment always involves much more than meets the eye. There will be a top and bottom layer (the shell), perhaps a baffle, the down itself, and sometimes an inner shell. It is important to be aware of this as you're sewing. Your aim is to catch in the sewing line *only the top layer* of fabric, and to do so securely. If you stitch through several layers, the down will be restricted, causing puckering and, more importantly, loss of warmth. However, if you don't catch enough of the layer, the patch won't hold.

There are some exceptions: Sometimes a patch is needed on an area that either doesn't contain down (for example, some collars) or does not contribute significantly to the warmth provided by the item (for example, jacket edges, drawstring casings). If that area is very worn or damaged, it may be better to sew through all layers in an attempt to preserve the garment as a whole.

How To Make Patches

Machine Patches

Measure the hole. Cut an oblong or square piece of patch material the shape and size of the hole plus 1/2 inch on all

sides. Iron under 1/4 inch on all sides, mitering corners as shown in Figure 1a.

Determine which area of the hole is easiest to pin—consider baffle seams, zippers, etc. that may get in the way. Make a 1/4 inch fold on one side of the area to be patched so that the hole is rather close to the edge of the fold line (see Figure 1b.)

Place the patch over the hole, lining up the edge of the patch with the fold line. Holding the fold *away* from the garment, pin through the fold and the patch (see Figure 1c.)

Again, holding the fold away from the garment, sew very close to the edges of the patch and fold. *Do not go through the garment when stitching, only the fold and the patch.* Secure thread at both ends with backstitching. Next, go to the opposite edge of the patch and repeat the procedure. It gets a little tricky here. Make sure the patch lies flat against the hole before pinning. Now, go to one of the remaining sides. Holding the corners of that edge, line up the fold with the patch edge, smoothing and straightening puckers. Pin and stitch the patch on the fold. Repeat with the last edge. You will end up with a small ridge on each side and a small pucker at each corner (see Figure 1d.)

Hand Patch—Outside

Measure and press the patch as described above for a machine patch. *Do not take up a fold* in the item being patched. Simply line up the patch over the hole and pin one side, pinning through the patch and the *top layer only* of shell material. Pin the opposite edge and remaining edges as shown in Figure 2a.

Working from left to right, *stitch through the garment first, then the patch,* as shown in Figure 2a. Start each stitch at the line where the patch meets the garment. Using small overhand stitches, stitch all edges, removing pins as each edge is completed (see Figure 2b.)

Hand Patch—Inside

Cut a piece of patch material the size of the hole plus 3/4 inch. If you're patching a burn hole or any hole with a darkened or hardened edge using this type of patch, trim away the discolored edges before pinning.

Work the patch to the inside of the hole, so that it lies flat against the underside of the top layer of shell fabric. Pin through two layers only—the top layer of what you're patching plus the patch itself. Pin securely. Using the same overhand stitch described above, *stitch through the patch first, then the shell material* as shown in Figure 3a. As you stitch, allow the edges of the hole to curl under against the patch (see Figure 3b.)

That's all there is to it!

For more information and a free brochure on The Down Depot's cleaning and repair services, contact:
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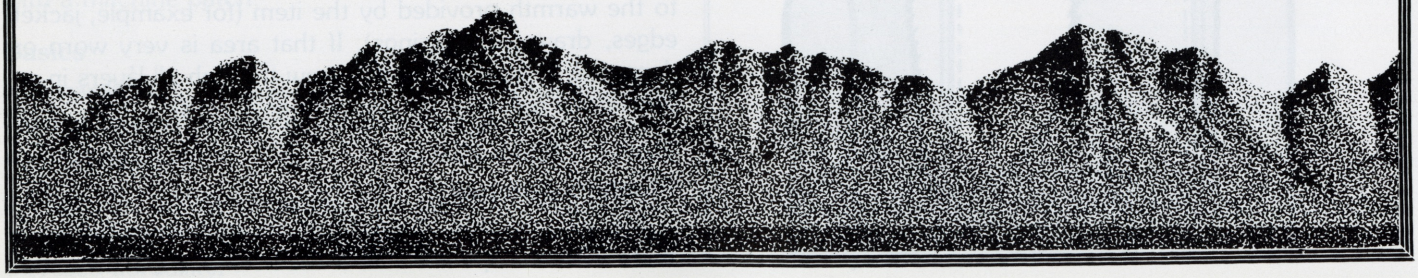

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River Canyon, bucking and screaming, spilling sugar and beans, denting cooking pots and scattering bedrolls in a futile attempt to escape a dagger in his ribs? Whatever occurred, it was burned into the memory of beholders, for well into the 1920s every outings bulletin warned of *hat pins in dunnage bags*. By this time photos show svelte flappers, their hair so minimal there was nothing for a hat pin to grab, but Colby was taking no chances.

Early in the second decade of Sierra outings there is a hint of near disaster on some mountain, for in 1914 came the suggestion that knickerbockers replace bloomers, and that knickers were "essential for the more difficult mountain climbs where skirts are dangerous to wear." What poor woman stepped on her voluminous skirt while attempting Mount Brewer? Or did some unfortunate man step on dragging fabric on the way down and suddenly find his legs pulled from under him when the wearer moved on? The possibilities are endless and not too pleasant to contemplate.

Once knickers were mentioned the floodgates seemed to open; the leader lost all control. By 1920 he had to admit many women simply wore knickers for the entire trip "to the exclusion of skirts." For the next eight or nine years skirts glided in and out of the clothing list like ghostly wraiths—in some years dead and gone, in others still recommended if they were "only a few inches below the knee."

At the same time the Chinese laundryman seems to have found a better job and women were told to bring their own "Fels Naptha" to wash their clothes, an incentive to minimal dressing.

American free enterprise responded quickly to the woman-in-the-mountains phenomenon and within a year of the first trip was marketing "outing suits." They reflected exactly what the bulletin described: bloomers, long-sleeved blouse, and a below-the-knee skirt, adding, however, a fashionable short coat and a little, ridiculous Alpine bonnet, perfectly useless in keeping the Sierra sun off one's face and neck. Women must have chosen practicality over fashion, for in later years the stylish cap was replaced by a wide hat, much like what rangers now wear. Women pictured in the ads became more active, too, and finally one was shown with a sheath knife at her belt and a fishing pole in her hand.

As the skirt market disappeared, designers tried new approaches. One company went to the expense of hiring Gloria Swanson to model their "outings

Split skirts were de rigueur for women on horseback in the early 1900's.

Photo courtesy of Winston Sutherland

suit" of tight breeches, topped with a long, form fitting coat whose skirt ended several inches *above* the knee. Another, hesitant to dump the skirt entirely, marketed "a good Sierra Hiking Suit," complete with sport shirt, breeches, and a skirt which could do double duty as a cape.

The outings suit evaporated in the radiant glow of the Roaring Twenties, votes for women, and the final demise of the corset. Young flappers raised their skirts to show a great deal of thigh and unashamedly donned pants when the occasion demanded. The outings bulletin in 1930 finally abandoned sexual dimorphism in clothing. Men and women were to have a stout hiking outfit, with an extra pair of trousers or knickers, a flannel shirt, and a sweater, windproof jacket, or parka.

It had taken twenty-nine years to banish hat pins, dark veils, high boots, bloomers, and skirts from the wilderness forever, and no one can regret their passing. The laundryman, on the other hand, just might be worth reviving. □

A tranquilized tule elk begins the first part of its journey to a new home.

Relocation to suitable areas was to replace hunting as a method of removing excess elk. Federal legislation in 1976 directed the Secretaries of Agriculture, Defense, and Interior to cooperate with the State of California in preserving tule elk. This required federal agencies to make their lands reasonably available as habitat for tule elk in the effort to attain the statewide goal of 2,000 individuals. The major challenge facing government agencies responsible for the tule elk is the location and evaluation of suitable areas for reintroduction.

In a conversation with Tom Blankinship, Wildlife Biologist with the California Department of Fish and Game at Bishop, I was able to get an update on Owens Valley tule elk. In a recent survey of tule elk in the Owens Valley a total of 609 individuals were counted. There were almost certainly more since it is unlikely that all were seen during the survey. Since 1977 a total of 264 elk from the Owens Valley have been relocated to five new areas in California. Currently the Department of Fish and Game has run out of places to put new elk and this problem will likely be compounded in a year or two when the Owens Valley elk population is expected to reach 700 to 800 animals. The Department of Fish and Game is considering relocations on private land but faces resistance from many of the owners since current law prohibits hunting. The private land owners do not want the damage caused by elk or the elk's competitive grazing without some benefit from the sale of permits to hunt on their land.

There is a growing number of people who would like the opportunity to see, even from far away, free roaming tule elk. The wildlife viewpoint near Tinemaha Reservoir provides one with a good chance to see some of the Owens Valley herd. Seeing the great animals unpinned, uncaged, uncorralled and free-roaming is a wonderful experience. It can even bring back a bit of nostalgia for California's past, when large herds of tule elk roamed the Central Valley. □

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John Ross Browne, 1860

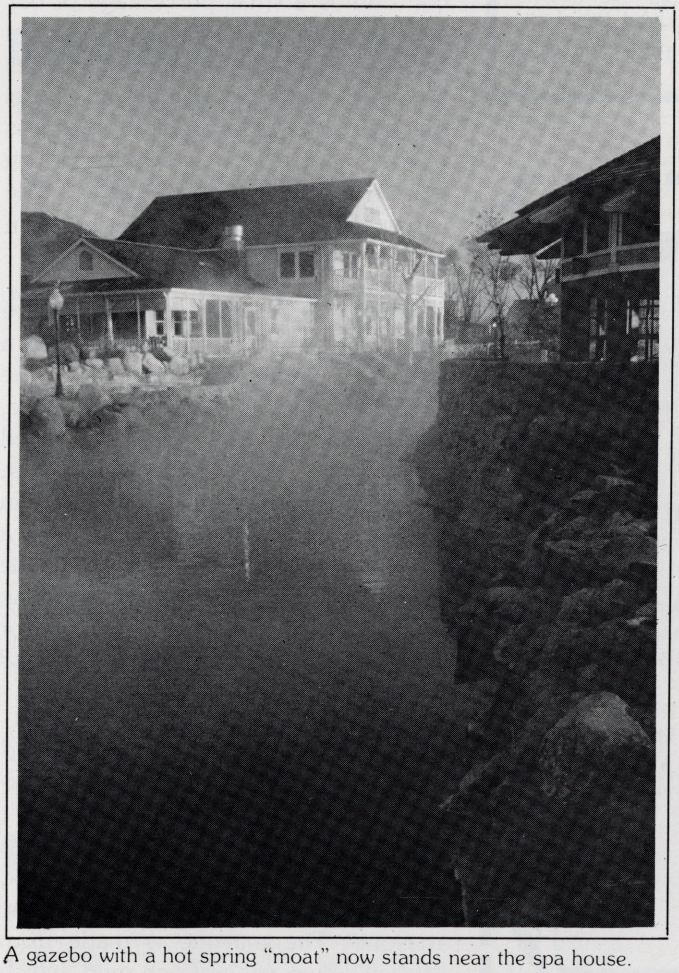
Walley's Hot Springs Resort, located at the base of the Sierra about 12 miles from Lake Tahoe, carries on a long tradition of providing comfort and relaxation to wayfarers, outdoorsmen, sportsmen and local residents. The historic spa resort, only 2 miles from the old Nevada town of Genoa, has been beautifully reconstructed and currently offers overnight accommodations and gourmet dining, as well as a rejuvenating soak in the famous mineral baths.

The original spa and hotel on the site was developed by David and Harriet Walley in the 1860's. It was intended as a luxury resort for the prominent citizens of Western Nevada, including silver miners who had struck it rich in the Comstock Lode. Both in design and function, it was patterned after the San Francisco bath house tradition; that city had at one time or other been the home of many of the resort's guests. Among the notables said to have visited Walley's are Mark Twain and Ulysses Grant. (Twain's newspaper, the *Territorial Enterprise*, was founded in Genoa and later moved to Virginia City.)

The Walleys provided their guests with health promoting facilities and excellent table fare. $25 would buy five days board and lodging, with board including "all the substantials and every delicacy in season." The couple maintained a garden from which they harvested produce for the restaurant's kitchen. In addition, they traded services for such goods as chicken, fish, butter, gooseberries, blackberries or pears.

After the death of David Walley and the later abandonment of the Comstock Lode, the resort went through a period of adversity and changed ownership several times. During Prohibition, it became a popular resting place for underworld figures. Later, Walley's reportedly attracted Hollywood celebrities like Clark Gable and Ida Lupino. The buildings at the resort were almost completely destroyed by fire in 1935, and a few stone structures are all that remain of the original establishment.

Walley's Hot Springs was recently rebuilt with the intention of offering modern facilities while preserving the best traditions of the 19th Century resort. The new spa house features a fitness center with both free and universal weights, a massage room, and sauna and steam baths. Another building houses the Zephyr Restaurant, with bar, banquet facilities and a private club room. There are presently six wooden cottages which accommodate overnight guests. Walley's owner Seth Atwood, who also owns the Clocktower Inn in Illinois, is currently planning an expansion of facilities at the Nevada resort.



A gazebo with a hot spring "moat" now stands near the spa house.

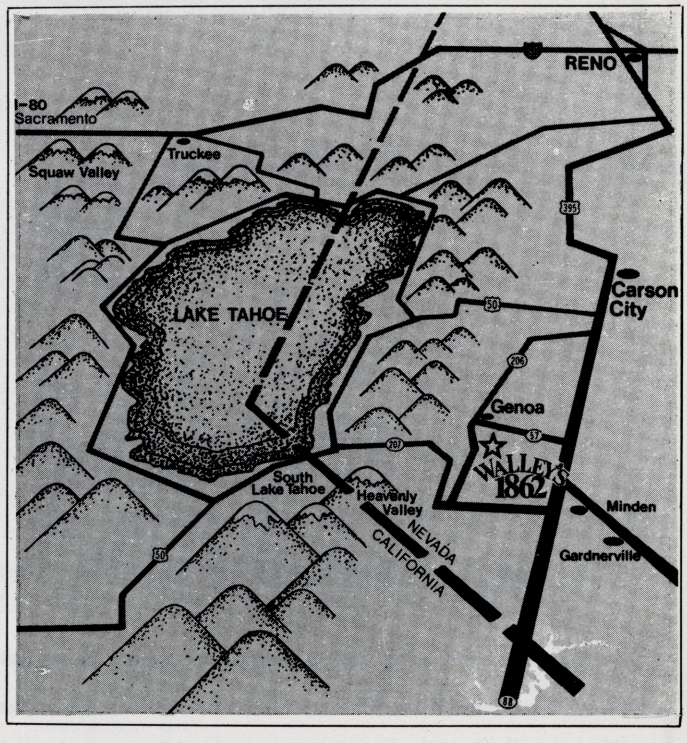
The overall design of the new spa house, with clapboard siding and gabled window pediments, recalls the Queen Anne style architecture of the original bath house building. Although the newer structures at the resort feature more contemporary building lines, they are reminiscent of the past in their use of rustic building materials like wood siding and exposed heavy timbers. The interiors of the buildings feature plush furnishings and beautifully finished wood paneling.

The Zephyr restaurant, which specializes in dishes ranging from beef and seafood to seasonal wild game specials, is elegantly designed and furnished. Inside the Zephyr is the restored "Stone Room," which was the bar in the original restaurant. There remains in the room a still-functional fireplace; in addition, it is decorated with old photographs and a glass case containing an antique bottle collection and fossils gathered from the surrounding area. The Stone Room is often reserved by groups for special occasions.

Another stone building which was a spa house at the old resort is today used for storage and also as a wine cellar.

The interiors of the cottages reflect the charm of the past. While featuring all modern accoutrements, they also have antique oak furniture, brass beds and antique brass fixtures in the bathrooms. The larger cottages have working wood stoves.

A new structure at Walley's is a wood and glass gazebo built on an island, surrounded by a hot spring "moat." It has an adjoining bar and is a distinctive and picturesque spot for banquets or special occasions.



Of course, the mineral baths are still the main attraction at Walley's. There are six outdoor hot tubs into which the natural mineral water is channeled. The water emerges from the springs at between 130 to 185 degrees, and is lowered to temperatures of between 100 and 104 degrees. In addition, there is a larger swimming pool tempered with fresh water which is kept at around 80 degrees. Although the pool is treated, the mineral water in the hot tubs is entirely natural and unadulterated. Roped off near the bath house is an extremely hot pool, the outflow from the geothermal heating system which heats the entire resort complex when the weather turns cold.

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(619) 934-2515- Mammoth Lakes
or write:
P.O. Box 918 Mammoth Lakes, CA. 93546
Jerry Russ' Resorts

During the daytime, a lifeguard is on constant duty in the spa area. Because of Health Department regulations, children under 12 are not allowed in the vicinity of the hot tubs. Also for safety reasons, smoking, eating or drinking are not permitted in the spa area.

The spa facilities at Walley's are available by membership, or on a per day basis for $7.00. "The membership contributes a small percentage of our total business," says Walley's General Manager Spencer Whitted, a Cornell graduate with a degree in hotel management. "Most of our business comes from the surrounding community, or from tourists." The resort has been visited by people from all over the world.

Guests who rent cottages receive complimentary spa priveleges and a delicious Continental breakfast. The breakfast includes croissant, juice, coffee and a large plate of sliced assorted fresh fruit—melons, oranges,pineapple and kiwifruit were in season in January. After a comfortable night in one of the cottages, a bracing early morning soak and the satisfying breakfast, a visitor can leave Walley's truly refreshed and invigorated.

The resort markets sweaters and rugby shirts with the Walley's logo imprinted on them. Also, they market their own line of cosmetic and skin care products, including hydrating complex, body lotion, sunscreen and clay masque. The masque is made from Walley's own mineral-rich mud, which is shipped to Texas where further ingredients are added.

Walley's Hot Springs Resort remains a popular destination for a good meal, a restorative soak, and a glimpse of Nevada's past. □

If you would like to visit Walley's Hot Springs Resort, telephone (702) 782-8155 or (702) 883-6556. Walley's is located one hour south of Reno near Genoa, NV.

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370 S. Main, Big Pine. Phone (619) 938-2282. Fifteen AAA approved units, Color TV, air conditioning, Queen sized beds, kitchenettes, family units, courtesy coffee.

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BISHOP ELMS MOTEL

233 East Elm Street, Bishop. Phone (619) 873-8118. Nineteen units. Cribs in rooms. Color TV. Air conditioned. Free ice. Queen beds in all rooms. Shaded lawn area. Fish cleaning and freezing facilities. Next to Bishop City Park.

BISHOP HOLIDAY SPA LODGE

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192 Short Street, Bishop. Phone (619) 873-4912. Twenty-two units. King and full size beds. Color cable TV. Air conditioning. Swimming pool. Family units; kitchens/kitchenettes. Fish cleaning facilities and freezer. Horseshoe pit. Pets OK. Cribs in rooms. Weekly rates available.

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BRIDGEPORT

ANNETT'S MONO VILLAGE

P.O. Box 455, Bridgeport, CA 93517. Phone (619) 932-7071. An excellent fishing resort, located on Twin Lake. Motel and cabins, camping, fishing, marina, general store, cafe and lounge.

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P.O. Box 475. On Highway 395 in Bridgeport, CA 93517. Phone (619) 932-7241 or toll-free (800) 528-1234. Thirty units, in-room coffee. Nearby trout fishing, hunting, photography. Close to Bodie and Twin Lake. Member of Best Western.

WALKER RIVER LODGE

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JUNE LAKE

FERN CREEK LODGE

Rt. 3, Box 7, June Lake, CA 93529. Phone (619) 648-7722 or toll-free (800) 621-9146. At the base of June Mountain, open all year. Modern housekeeping cabins, with fireplace and TV. One, two and four bedrooms at last year's rates. Grocery store, deli, propane and Union 76.

JUNE LAKE MOTEL

P.O. Box 98, June Lake, CA 93529. Phone (619) 648-7547. Indoor Jacuzzi and sauna, 19 large rooms, one and two bedroom duplexes, kitchens available. Cable color TV, in-room coffee. Fish four lakes. Walk to restaurants, coffee shops, cocktail lounges. Nearby streams, hiking, swimming, horseback riding, hunting, cross country and downhill skiing. 17 miles from Lee Vining, eastern Gateway to Yosemite.

JUNE LAKE—JUNE MOUNTAIN RESERVATION SERVICE

P.O. Box 216, June Lake CA 93529. Phone (619) 648-7794 or 1-800-648-2211. A complete reservation service serving June Lake and Lee Vining since 1954. Offering the widest variety of accommodations in the Eastern Sierra. Open year round, seven days a week. Free brochures, tourist information, and vacation planning kit upon request. We provide lodging to fit every budget. Pick your rate, pack your bags, one call does it all!

LAKE FRONT CABINS

Box 87, June Lake, CA 93529. Phone (619) 648-7527. Located on June Lake. One and two bedroom cabins nestled in the pines have knotty pine interiors, thermostat heat, cable color TV, electric blankets and are fully carpeted. Large lawn and barbeque area. Fish cleaning facilities and freezer. Walk to restaurants and market. Rates: $36 and $48. Off-season rates during May and October. Visa and Mastercard welcome.

RAINBOW RIDGE

A condominium reservation and management company in June Lake, offering condominiums at: June Lake Villas & Motel, Big Rock Resort, Birch Creek Condos, Sierra Suns Condos, and June Lake Pine Cottages. Call toll-free (800) 462-5589.

SILVER LAKE RESORT

P.O. Box 116, June Lake, CA 93529. Phone (619) 648-7525 for reservations and information. Cabin units with kitchens, one to three bedrooms, in the aspens, some with lake views. Large R.V. Park with complete hook-up, shower room and laundry facilities. General store with complete line of groceries, liquor and tackle. Cafe with good country cooking. Boat rentals and gas. Located on Silver Lake 4 miles from June Lake Village on Hwy 158.

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Star Route 3, Box 14-B, June Lake, CA 93529. Phone (619) 648-7762. Twenty-four Housekeeping units, color cable TV. Close to stores and restaurants. AAA approved. Off-season rates available in July, September, and October: Five nights, two persons, only $25 per night.

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P.O. Box 345, 30 Main Street, Lee Vining, CA 93541. At the Gateway to Yosemite, near junction of Hwy 395 & 120. In-room coffee, guest laundromat, Color TV, excellent fishing. Close to Bodie. Member of Best Western.

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310 South Main Street, Lone Pine. Phone (619) 876-5521. Thirty-nine units. King, queen, double size beds. Color cable TV. Telephones. Swimming pool and spa. Coffee in rooms. Some pets OK. Master Card, Visa, American Express, Carte Blanche welcome.

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The Arts
Windows on the Owens Valley

By Katie Wilkinson

Many have shared the experience of walking into a cathedral and being captivated by the colored light there. The shimmering sapphire and amber, radiant ruby and emerald fill the darkness. Medieval man believed that light's passage through stained glass reflected the change in mankind when the Divine Word illuminated his soul. From Romanesque windows to the rose windows of High Gothic cathedrals, where lead tracery merged with an overall architectural design, stained glass has fired man's imagination. It creates a new environment, transforming a room into a jewel box. As local stained glass artist Hope Nolen attests, "Stained glass is unique."

Nolen began working with glass nine years ago, in her free time from teaching chemistry and physics at Big Pine High School. In the summer she studies at a stained glass workshop in Vail, Colorado, and also attends other stained glass conferences and workshops across the country. Nolen exhibits her work in the Mammoth Labor Day Art Festival and at local galleries.

Currently her energy is focused on a multicolored domed Tiffany lamp made of expensive Uroboros glass with scalloped edges. The lamp recalls a milestone in the history of stained glass art, because it is a Tiffany pattern. Throughout the ages techniques for glasswork have differed. During the Renaissance craftsmen resorted to painting directly on clear glass in imitation of frescoes and murals. However, their depth of field was limited by lead lines—a constant reminder of the windows' two dimensionality. The craft continued to decline until the turn of the century when Louis Comfort Tiffany experimented with pigmentation, and returned to the use of colored glass. Tiffany glass saturated the spectrum with rich tones and textures, in the tradition of medieval glasswork. A rainbow from the Dark Ages arced into the present. Stained glass once again contended with other arts.

"Just looking through stained glass appeals to me," Nolen says. "It's dynamic, never the same. Light is both reflected and transmitted. I started out doing watercolors; now when I look at watercolors I want to see through them, I want to see the brilliance of glass."

Ten wood-framed stained glass windows hang in front of the east facing picture window in Nolen's living room. In the changing light of day their colors change. Blues appear more luminescent when the light is low. Reds and yellows stand out sharply at midday. Unlike the way sunlight affects a painting, it literally enters into each window. From sunrise to sunset a movement of color occurs; some values are highlighted while the impact of others is diminished. By dusk only a glossy luminescence reflects from the window surface. The effect lends a ghostly, almost supernatural property to the translucent medium.

Nolen admits to being so fascinated by glass that she has entertained thoughts of learning to make it herself. In her garage workshop, sorting through pattern pieces of mottled pink and white artist's glass, she explains its manufacture: "Most glass is machine-made. Molten glass, with pigments already added, drips through rollers onto a conveyor where it cools in smooth, thin sheets of a constant thickness. Hand-blown glass is formed by glassblowers into a long molten cylinder, cut off at both ends and slit down the sides. Recurving halves are then placed in an annealing oven where they slowly flatten and cool."

Nolen studies glass pieces carefully in order to mold the intricacies of her design to the nature of the glass. Her initial idea for composition often changes to fit the characteristics of the material. "I let the glass determine the detail," she observes. "Its an organic style of creating. Composition develops as I go."

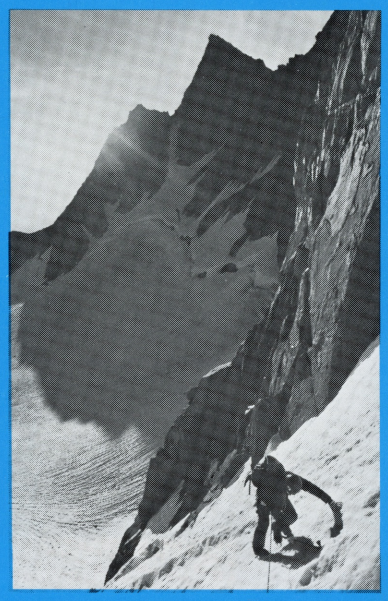
Certain of Nolen's custom orders are pattern pieces, such as a massive oval door window of clear glass with sandblasted filigree engraved about a central flower, and fleur-de-lis at top and bottom. Sandblasting produces a milky white opaqueness and sometimes a lace pattern in clear glass. The delicacy of the resulting detail contrasts

Hope Nolen

Three pieces which represent the artist's range of glass work: *Big Pine Warrior* (right) done in thick dalle glass, *Geese* (below) and *Three Sheep* (below right) done in Chicago art glass.

Photos by Hope Nolen

MGS



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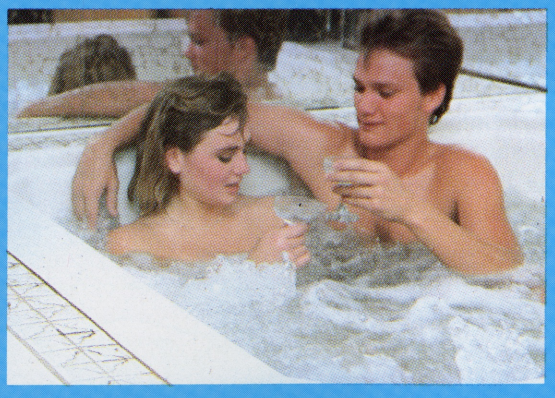

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with the rapid erosion of the surface created by jets of sand. Sandblasting can produce a surprisingly intricate end product.

"Some of my windows are not planned at all, they're executed," she explains, referring to her "modern" period. Bits of metal, cracked glass, bright colors and varying textures work together to achieve an unexpected harmony. A large window with a vermillion streak across the top is entitled "Metaphysical Break," only partially in reference to a meandering vertical crack. "This is my favorite piece, I would never sell it," she says. The philosophical impact of the piece is elusive but striking. Below the red glass most of the area is textured clear glass—several layers of it. In the lower left hand corner a small wedge of midnight blue balances the upper expanse of color. "The blue represents my dark side," Nolen explains jovially, indicating that the depth of her talent is a pleasant mixture of light and shadow, philosophy and observation.

Nolen reveals that she is also "very impressed with Impressionism—particularly Gauguin." Her latest work, "Three Sheep," depicts farmland, mountains beyond, and three white sheep with black legs. An old wagon wheel rests in one corner of the composition. Sunflowers bloom in the foreground. This work, she says, was inspired by a Gauguin print framed above her fireplace named "The Swineherder." Nolen changed the subject matter to fit her experience in the Owens Valley. She retained the "brave colors" of the master in her effort to express a painterly style in stained glass.

Nolen describes herself as diverging from the traditionalist: "I'll do anything with glass if it needs it," she says. "I love to put things *on* glass." The artist went to welding school to learn how to make a bundle of glass sticks of firewood suspended by a chain from the piece "Winter Woman." White streaks suggesting snow outline the figure of an old woman carrying wood into her teepee. Nolen describes how a local Paiute potter, Dorothy Stewart, helped her study the Indian tribes that built teepees, such as the Sioux. From her investigations she created a symbolic border pattern of Indian signs.

"Indian Girl," with its deep crimson and brown, exhibits several examples of original design details: Lace between sheets of glass becomes a collar, melted glass makes a bead necklace, and gold thread between glass panes suggests the dress pattern.

Giant Pandas 12" by 18"

Jesse Stewart

"Continuity is the key to working with stained glass," Nolen offers. "Textures must blend with other areas. I keep swirls going past lead lines, for instance." Most of her compositions continue outward into a meaningful border pattern. The sense of continuity spills further—into a variety of hardwood frames she designs and builds herself.

Nolen's approach to stained glass is so varied that her final words ring true: "There's no limit to the range of ideas for stained glass. Whatever you think about, you can do." Not everyone, however, has attained the level of craftsmanship necessary to carry out their dreams. In nine years, Nolen has learned to manipulate glass through the aid of steel wheel glass cutters, sand, and surprisingly, glue. This last material chips away the glass surface to a faceted texture.

Morning Song 15" by 26"

Jesse Stewart

Nolen's methods serve as a modern contrast to medieval glassworkers who worked by drawing hot metal pokers across glass to crack it. Yet the range of light through the many colors in Nolen's windows rivals medieval artistry in intensity and design, if not in size. She has even created a stained glass music box that plays Beethoven's *Fur Elise*. Nolen's husband Bill invented and assembled the electronic components of the music box.

Her latest work is a warrior, the symbol of Big Pine High School, with black hair suggested by a dramatic epoxy setting, and a lavender and smoky-grey headdress. It will be mounted on the stone marquis in front of the high school. Constructed of thick dalle glass cast in epoxy, the work represents Nolen's recent step towards architectural designs in glass. So remarkable is the tensile strength of dalle glass it can design an entire wall. To bring highlights into the glass, it can be faceted with a chipping hammer. □

SIERRA LIFE MAGAZINE'S

Photo Contest

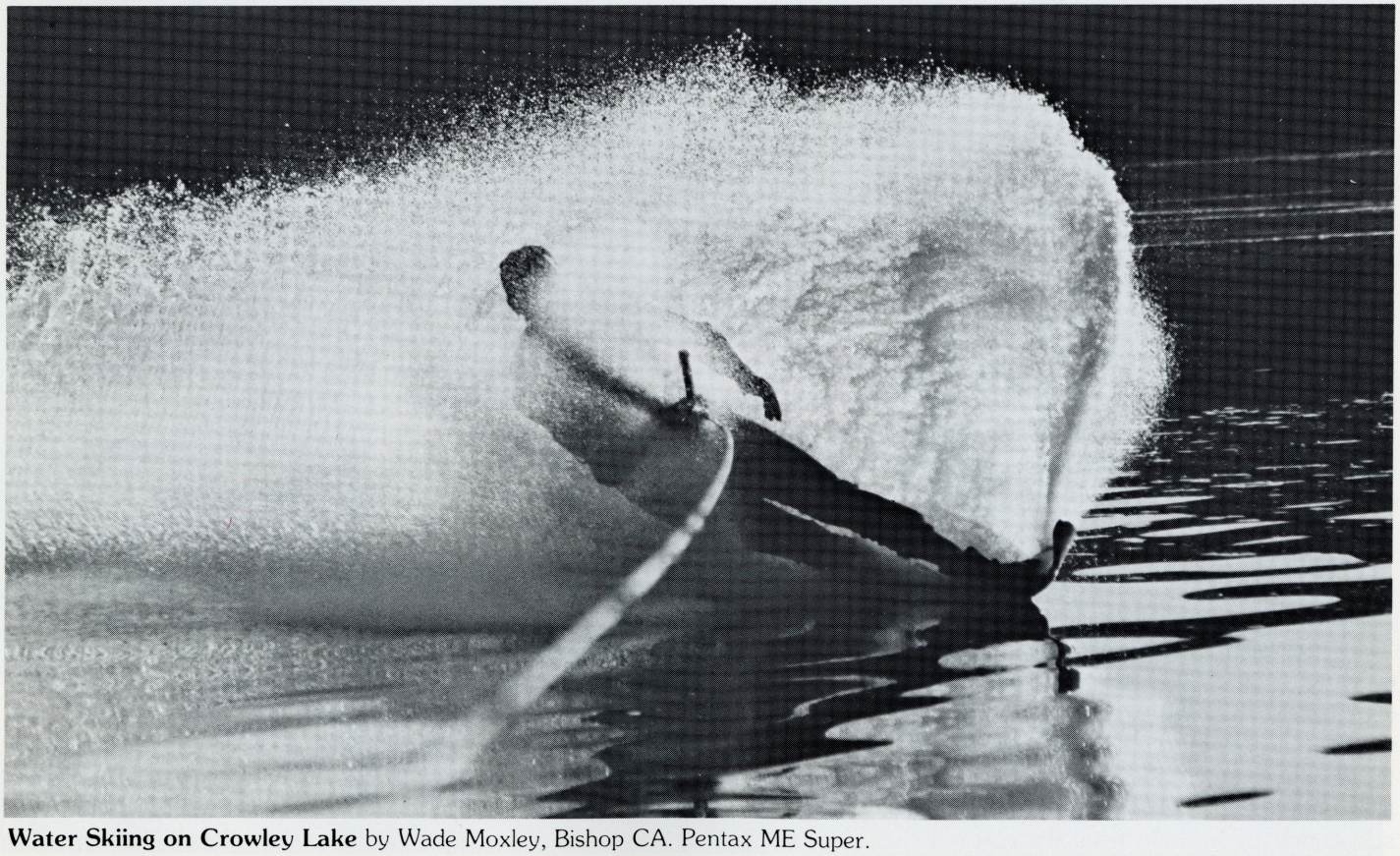
W I N N E R S

The response to the First Annual Sierra Life Photo Contest was overwhelming. The large number of outstanding entries made it difficult to pick only a few winners.

Congratulations to William Broeckel of Loma Linda, California for taking First Place with his Banner Peak *entry (see inside front cover), and to Wade Moxley of Bishop, California for his First Place Black & White entry,* Water Skiing on Crowley Lake *(below).*

We would like to thank photographic savants Bob Nordquist, Michael Cooke of Wilson's Fast Photo, and Bishop Chamber of Commerce manager Denton Sonke for working with our staff in judging the entries. Also, a special thank you to Michael Cooke for his co-sponsorship of the contest.

1st PLACE BLACK & WHITE

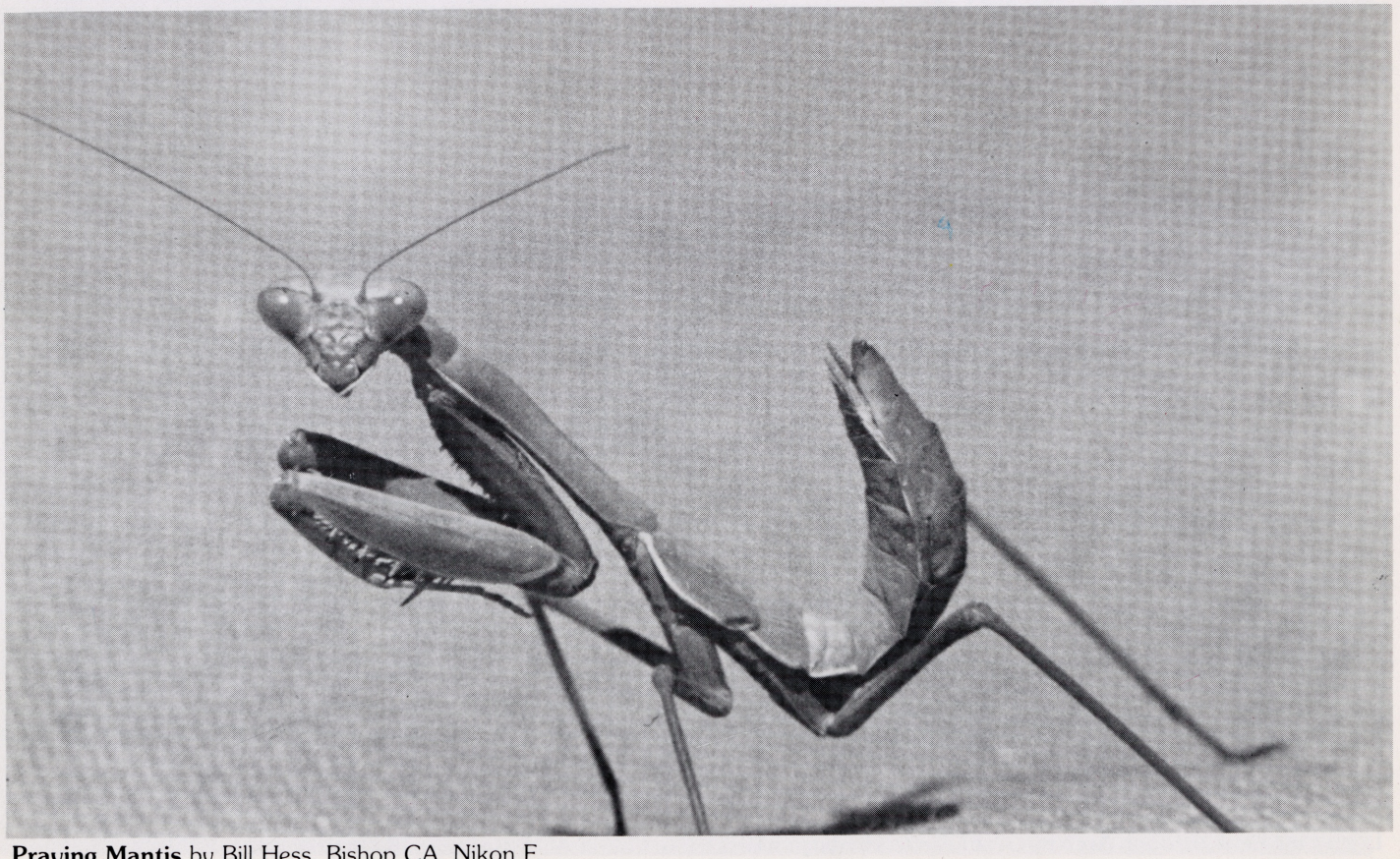


Water Skiing on Crowley Lake by Wade Moxley, Bishop CA. Pentax ME Super.

2nd PLACE BLACK & WHITE

Round-Up by Criss Marquess, Stovepipe Wells CA. Nikon F.

3rd PLACE BLACK & WHITE

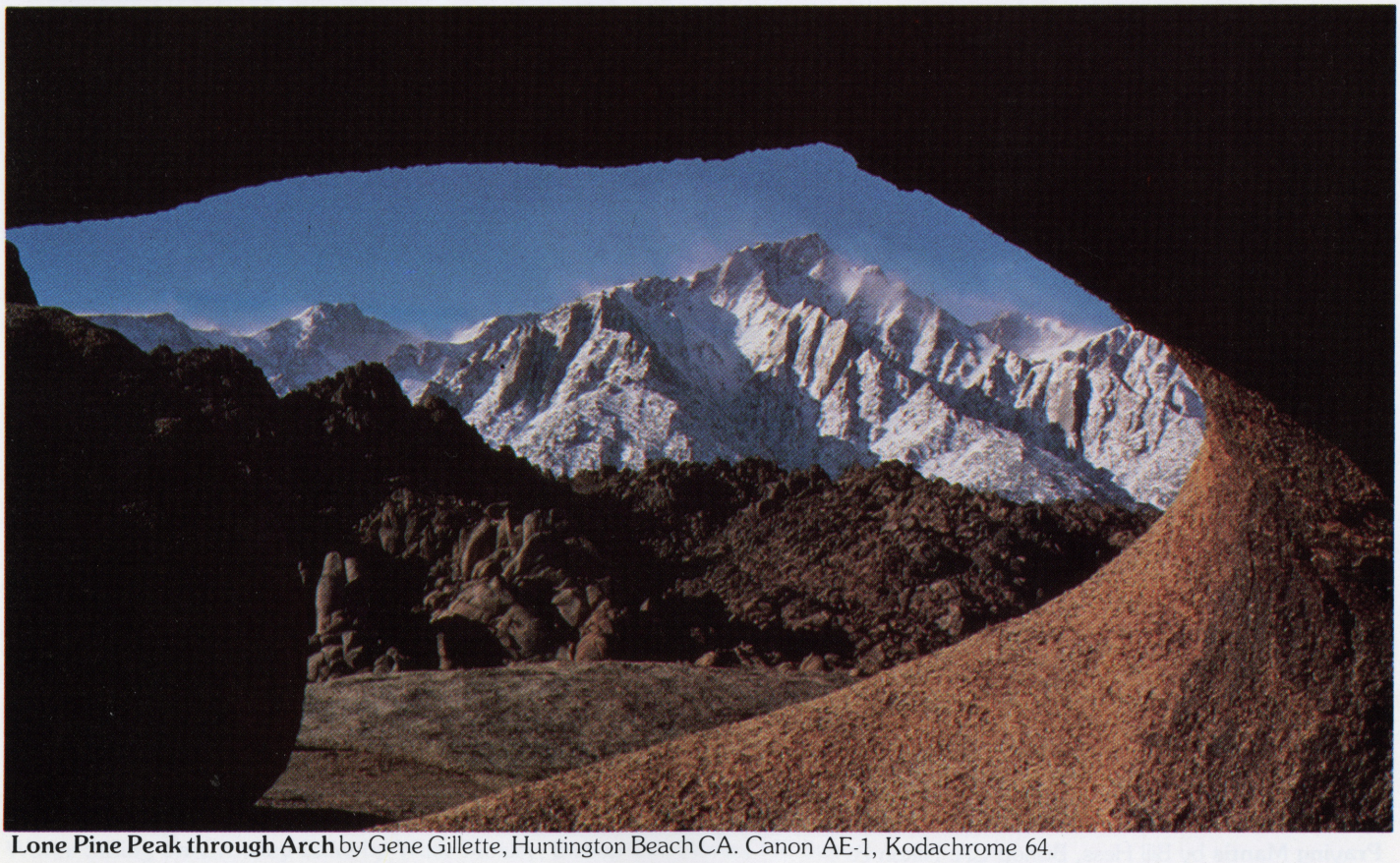


Praying Mantis by Bill Hess, Bishop CA. Nikon F.

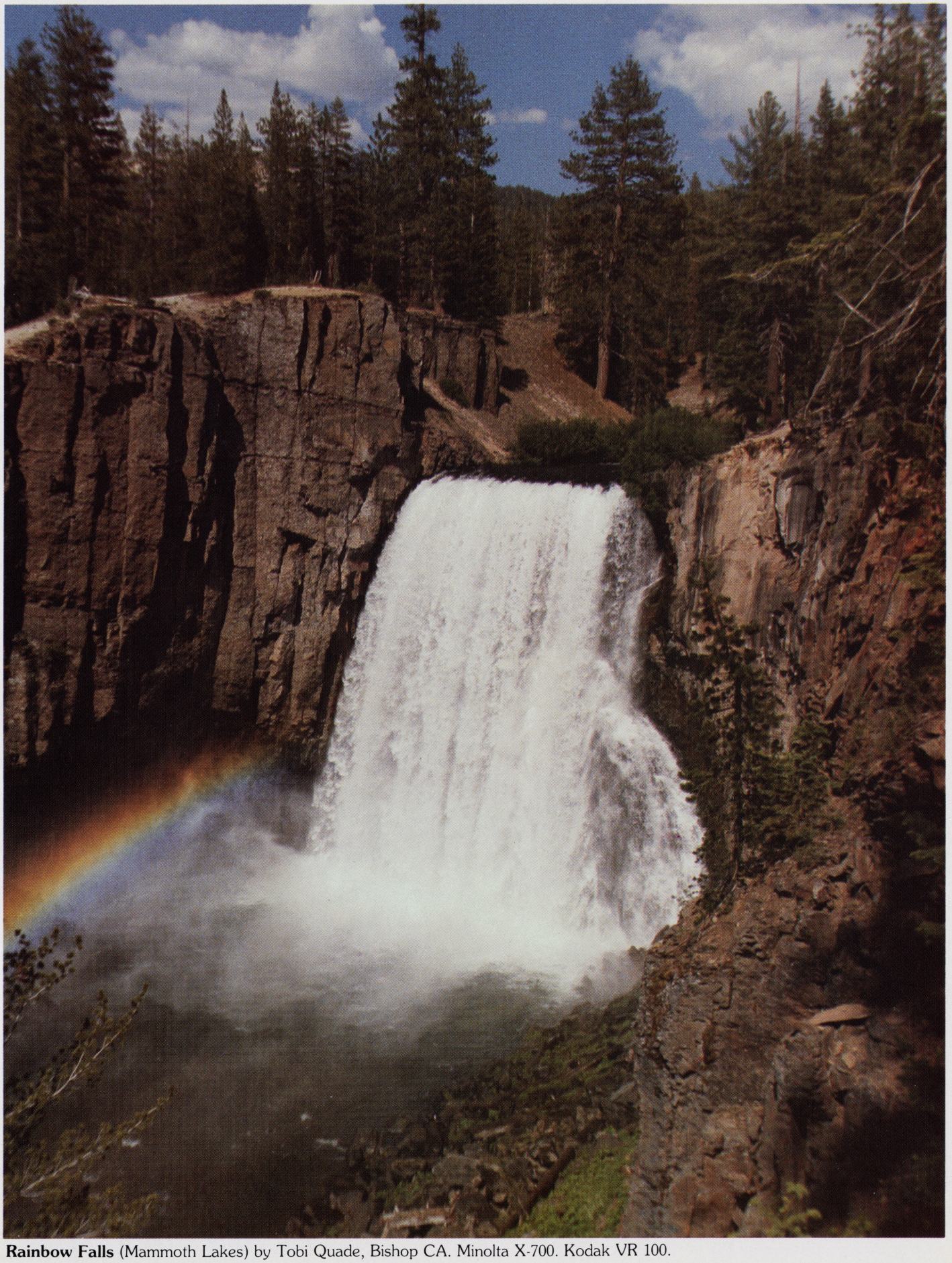
2nd PLACE COLOR

Cabin in the Woods (Mammoth Lakes) by Norm Croxon, Bishop CA. Minolta 35 mm, Kodak VR 100.

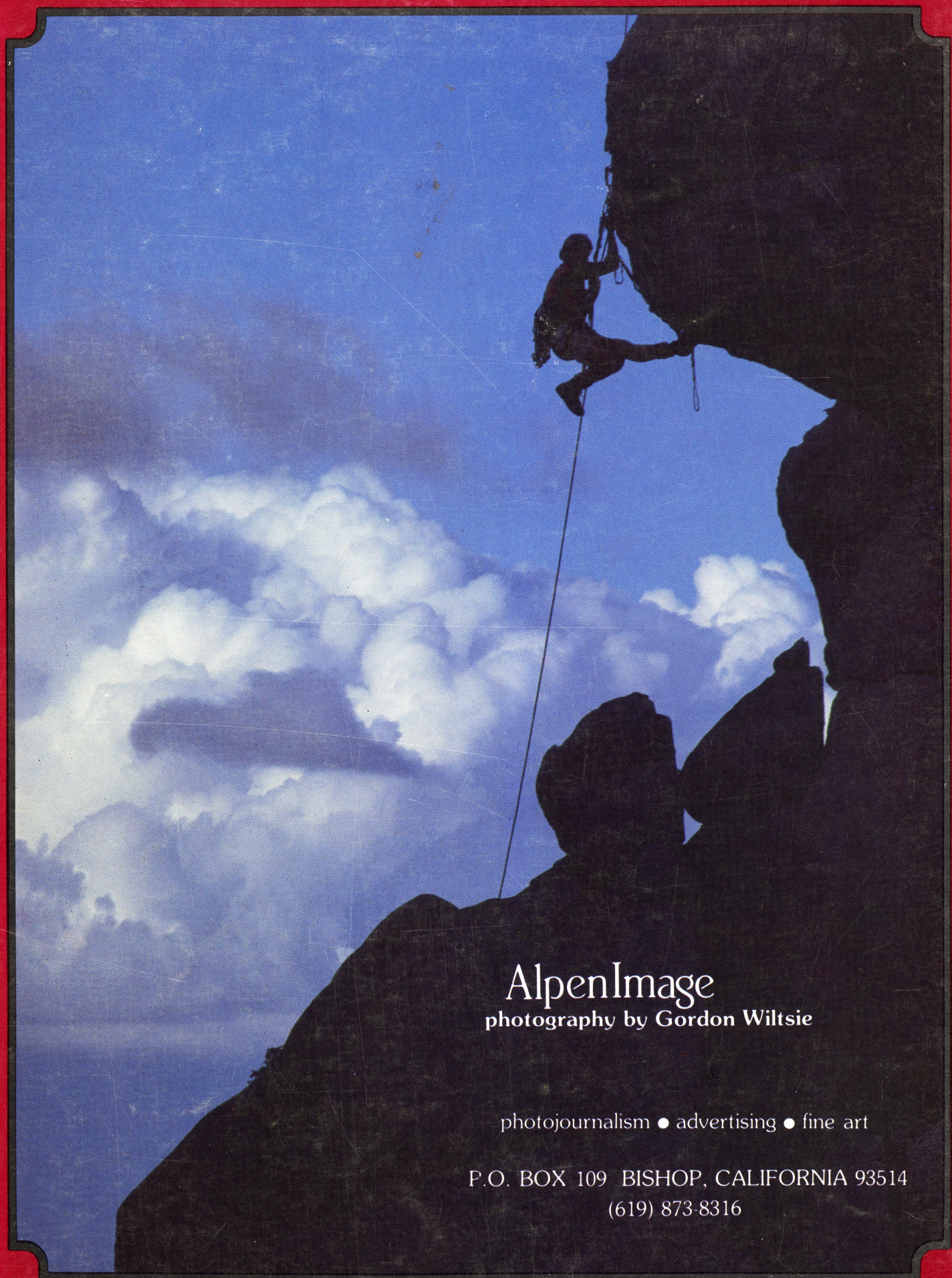
3rd PLACE COLOR



Lone Pine Peak through Arch by Gene Gillette, Huntington Beach CA. Canon AE-1, Kodachrome 64.



Rainbow Falls (Mammoth Lakes) by Tobi Quade, Bishop CA. Minolta X-700. Kodak VR 100.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Sierra Life Magazine

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We apologize. . .

Dear Readers,

Many of you have experienced our "growing pains" along with us over the past five years. We thank you for your patience. We may be short on budget, but we have a mountain of determination.

We are about to solve our biggest problem by installing our own high quality printing plant. If everything goes according to plan, we will print our September/October issue right here in Bishop. This is a giant step for us, but one that we feel is necessary in order to publish on a regular schedule and achieve the high quality which we demand and you expect.

Many of you have written or telephoned to inquire about your subscriptions. We want to assure you that your subscriptions remain in effect until you have received all the issues you have paid for.

You have all been patient and understanding. We appreciate that more than you could possibly know. We know that you enjoy reading Sierra Life as much as we enjoy bringing it to you, and we will continue bringing you the very best magazine that we know how to produce.

Again, thank you for your patience. Each and every one of you are very special to us!

Warm Regards,

Sandie Pramann
Publisher/Editor